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Albert Dasnoy

What is Vulgarity?

I

WHAT is vulgarity? As far as I know, the subject has been very little explored, though it impinges on us every day of our lives and is one of our pet topics of conversation. No doubt this is because it is difficult to characterise exactly. It is hard enough to find a definition which will be universally valid in our own age and society; it is impossible to project our own idea of vulgarity back on to the past. Many things which appear decidedly vulgar to modern eyes are precisely those which their contemporaries regarded as supreme examples of good taste. Again, we have practically no means of knowing whether what we Europeans consider vulgar seems so, for example, to a Chinese. Still less do we know whether we should agree with the latter in his estimate of Chinese vulgarity.

Travellers have often been astounded to find hideous Western knick-knacks proudly displayed in highly civilised Arab, Hindu, and Tibetan homes. Taste, impeccable where native art is concerned, goes wildly astray in judging objects which come from Europe. One is only too likely to see chromo-lithographs of the kind which adorn our calendars and chocolate-boxes flaunting their simpering inanity in the midst of exquisite examples of traditional Asiatic art.

Europe may flatter itself that it does not make quite such appalling blunders. Part of the nature of the European genius consists in studying foreign cultures with intelligent interest and patient curiosity. This enables it to appreciate their works with considerably more perspicacity than the Chinese and the Hindus have ever displayed towards each other's art, or than either of them towards our own. Those Japanese and Chinese curios, those ivory and boxwood statuettes and cloisonné enamel vases, for which our middle classes so long had a mania, were often extremely mediocre. Yet they were immeasurably superior to those European bazaar products which Loti, to his despair, kept finding even in the farthest East. It is only fair to add that the scales have been heavily weighted against the East and that our own taste has not been subjected to the same ordeal: until very recently, nothing produced in the entire world has rivalled the shoddiness of the stuff with which our industries have flooded Asia and Africa for an entire century.

II

IN SPITE of all this, we can apply the word "vulgarity" exactly enough within the limits of our own society. We agree about what it describes, if not about what it means. The repugnance which vulgarity inspires is something very positive; we all experience it daily according to our capacity. When, in Péguy's writings, we reach the year of crisis and illumination which simultaneously let loose a torrent of invective and impelled him towards the heights of poetry, we understand perfectly what has happened. The vulgarity of his age has suddenly been revealed to him in all its enormity, and that is what he has violently uprooted from his own being in order to create that saving *void* of which he spoke to his friends at that critical time.

There is vulgarity of the heart; vulgarity of the mind; vulgarity of taste; vulgarity of behaviour. There is the vulgarity of a particular age, such as we speak of when we denounce "the vulgarity of today"; there is the vulgarity that springs from the innermost depths of an

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individual human being. Have such varied manifestations anything in common? If so, how can we distinguish this common factor?

Voltaire had impeccable taste in writing prose. But there was considerably more vulgarity in his thought than in that of Rousseau, though the latter made up for this by being a rather vulgar person. We are aware of vulgarity in 16th century art and traces of it already in that of the fifteenth. Yet it is so far removed from the vulgarity which appears in the 19th century that we can only think of it as belonging to another order. That, at least, is the impression we generally receive from historic collections; in particular from the Pinacoteca in the Vatican when, after having followed the course of painting through five centuries, we suddenly emerge into the Gallery of Modern Art. Again, in some delightful house belonging to people of unerring taste in clothes and furniture, we are quite likely to come across pictures and bronzes of inexcusable vulgarity. Naturally, we ask ourselves how taste can be so perfect in one realm and so imperfect in another.

What general notion can we form of vulgarity? It must not be confused with triviality, grossness, banality, triteness, bad taste, nor even with caddishness although it is found in company with all of these, particularly with the last. Nor is it merely the opposite of refinement: to think of it as such would be to limit its scope. Rubens sneered at refinement and often displayed a monstrous lack of it. But, in his flabbier moments, he merely failed to achieve a vulgarity that is natural to him and that finds a place in his most splendid triumphs. It is part of the very essence of his genius, as it is, perhaps, of that of all baroque art. There we have a typical case of a kind of healthy vulgarity inseparable from all vital human works. It is the same vulgarity we find in Rabelais, Franz Hals, and Balzac. Its vigour strengthens the forces which, in certain situations, have to break down the barriers of formalism and to pass beyond the scruples of refinement. It does not even need the excuse of genius. In everyday life we are constantly coming across a generous, naïve vulgarity which we readily forgive.

For simplicity's sake, let us say that we will speak here only of unpardonable vulgarity.

We can say of a man that he is common or ordinary. But as soon as we go so far as to say he is vulgar, we also imply the notion of aggressiveness. For vulgarity takes the initiative: it is self-assertive, self-confident, and self-defensive. It does not need speech or action to express itself: a look, a mere gesture is enough. Yet sometimes it is accompanied by such utter complacency that its aggressiveness is lost in the display of an imperturbable self-possession.

III

It was in the colonial countries that the problem of vulgarity appeared to me in its most striking aspect. Confronted with coloured people it is only too easy for the white to seem vulgar. It is a fact that, despite everything, the European cuts a poor figure compared with the Negro. Moreover, he is perfectly aware of this. A doctor once showed me some photographs of a journey through the bush. First of all, one saw any number of negroes, taken at random on the road and in the villages with the usual cruelty of snapshots. "And here," said the doctor, "we have the European in all his eminence." And there he was himself, standing beside his wife in a highly dignified attitude, surrounded by native bearers. The two whites had an indefinable, yet undeniable, air of vulgarity, due not to any personal characteristic (they were both well-born and well-bred) but to their very nature as Europeans. I teased him a little and he finally retorted: "It's the misfortune of being civilised. If the blacks aren't as vulgar as we are, it's probably because they're as incapable of vulgarity as animals."

Vulgarity, in fact, belongs only to man. But it is not quite true to say that it corresponds to a particular degree of civilisation. In the Congo, the peoples against whom the white show up worst are also the most advanced and aristocratic of their kind. They are, for example, the Arabic or Hamite tribes; in particular the Watusis, so vaunted in travel-prospectuses for their noble physique. The Bantus, and still more the wild forest tribes, have none of this

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nobility. Yet neither have they any vulgarity. They may be brutal or bestial; yet, even at their lowest, one never encounters a certain incurable, hereditary degradation of feature and bearing. "The reason," my colonial doctor told me, "is that, among them, there is no such thing as stunted spiritual vocation. Our own particular ugliness is nothing else but that."

I think, myself, that it is rather more a matter of personality, or, to be precise, of impersonality. All this borders, of course, on the spiritual. Coloured people in the colonies normally have —or have had—a patience, a placidity, which comes from the effacement of the individual in the framework of a traditional life, and which confers on them a mysterious racial grandeur. African Negro faces are less differentiated and, individually, may be less interesting. But neither do they ever bear the stigmata of a stupid or petty individualism. One never sees them marked by the peevishness of a frustrated will or by the bitterness of a disappointed egotism. Nor do they ever reflect the dull complacency of our common sense. The people may look obtuse: they never look inane. And all that we say about their faces can be said equally about their bodies, the carriage of their heads, the way they walk and the gestures they use.

It could be objected that all this is highly debatable and relies on purely personal judgement. But one fact can be positively stated and it is a highly significant one. No trace of vulgarity existed in the art and craftsmanship of the Congo before the Europeans came to teach the Negro "artists" the coarseness of Western realism and before our shoddy manufactured goods depraved their taste.

IV

To go to the root of the matter we must, I think, begin with this established fact: namely, that anything which is genuinely primitive is neither vulgar nor even susceptible to vulgarity. In an ethnological museum you will find the grotesque, the obscene, and the repulsive—but the vulgar, never. Vulgarity only appears at a certain point in the development of civilisations.

We can risk a hypothesis which springs quite naturally to the mind after what we have just been saying: vulgarity is a consequence of rationalism and makes its appearance in the world simultaneously with it. Philosophic rationalism is not, in itself, tainted with vulgarity; but the shock it produces in the spiritual realm impels the average mind along a path which leads inevitably to fundamental scepticism and to the advent of common sense. In art, this is expressed by a tyrannical and ever increasing insistence on realism; in the spiritual realm it appears as the emancipation of mediocrity. If we are unwilling to accept any human manifestation that is not completely free from vulgarity, we should have to confine ourselves to what man has been, and to what he has made, under the influence of the sacred.

The sacred, or the magical, even with all the aberrations it entails, is a sure guarantee against vulgarity. Yet it is also the guarantee of the irrational. Vulgarity seems to be the price of man's liberation; one might even say, of his evolution. It is unquestionably the price of the freeing of the individual personality. Archaic Greek art is untainted by it, but not Greek art of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. An exhibition of Roman portraits shows us that, between the Etruscan style of the earliest and the Byzantine style of the latest, vulgarity made its first full-blooded appearance in the academic realism of imperial Rome.

In French art, one can see its birth in the 15th century and it grows steadily till it reaches its apotheosis in the 19th. After that comes a violent reaction which impels art into the puritanism of the functional and the abstract. But, in this terrified retreat, it loses the greater part of its riches and the masses are left abandoned to a hopeless degradation.

If realism is not, in itself, vulgar, it gives every opportunity for vulgarity. It creates the soil and the climate in which vulgarity flourishes. Realism was the downward slope which in the 19th century led art and thought to the lowest depths of their entire history.

Here we are faced with the complex structure of our problem. Vulgarity in art is a function of realism, or, at any rate, in league with it. But the development of realism is closely connected with the claims of reason and the

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viewpoint of science. From the moment when, at the dawn of the Renaissance, painting launched on the progressive conquest of the real, it encumbered itself with a fatal burden which was eventually to crush it under the platitudes of naturalism. Yet, at the same time, its genius was released for bold flights which were to raise it to hitherto unscaled peaks of beauty and pathos. The work of Michelangelo attains a sublimity which the Gothic and Roman artists, in their mystical obedience, had never even envisaged. But if we compare his statues with those of Chartres or Moissac, for example, we see at once what genius has precariously won and what style has definitely lost. Rembrandt's painting is a cogent example of this double process of the elevation of the individual artist and the encumbering of art itself. No one went further than Rembrandt in the expressing of psychological truth: no one equalled him in extolling the splendour and mystery of matter. Yet, if we set his most moving works beside certain sober portraits by Van der Weyden or Van Eyck, we see clearly what menaces that art. We see how it is weighed down by an encroaching materialism and how that very psychology, so noble and so profound, destroys the pure syntax of the language of art and already borders on vulgarity.

Once launched on this path, nothing can prevent art from declining into utter degradation. In the 19th century, we shall see this internal conflict resolved by a complete break between the grossest materialism and the ethereal idealism of the symbolists and the Pre-Raphaelites.

V

WHAT kind of a world have the bourgeois and the philistine of our democratic society organised and invited the masses to live in? A world where art is limited to the "slice of life" and the "wonderful likeness"; where eroticism is the only disturbing element and official allegory usurps the place of the sublime. In such a world, politics is reduced to social security and the jockeying of vested interests; the idea of administration replaces that of government; while religion becomes no more than a form of moral hygiene, useful—like the police—in keeping down crime.

Spiritual vulgarity springs from self-complacency of judgement, from the claim to reduce everything to common sense. And here we probably have the heart of this whole matter of vulgarity.

"Thou shalt not judge." That is the first commandment of spiritual dignity. In judging, we reduce reality to our own measure. But, if we know how to suspend judgement, we open ourselves to the infinite greatness of reality. We must suspend judgement, or modify it with sufficient prudence to enable us to keep revising it, for judging is a function of life and one that we cannot avoid. How often we have to blush for some hasty, ill-considered judgement or have to overcome some narrow prejudice. The vulgar mind is impervious to this shame. On the contrary, it imposes its own measure on all things with aggressive self-complacency, and assumes the right to be constantly judging with complete confidence in its infallibility. Indeed, it judges everything in advance by meeting all that goes beyond what it considers reasonable with a facile, chaffing scepticism. It installs its moral and intellectual comfort in the impregnable fortress of common sense. Common sense has a ready answer to everything and no further consideration is required.

When the standard of the commonplace is combined with the self-assertion of the individual, the merely vulgar becomes vulgarity. As the individual has become more and more emancipated, and as duller minds and vast masses have assumed the right to self-assured judgement, so vulgarity has increased. Today, that total emancipation has been achieved. The humblest dock-hand is morally and intellectually free: free to recognise nothing superior to his own private opinions. Democratic institutions confirm his claims by attributing the same political capacities to everyone indiscriminately. Certainly, the individual is forced to bow down to the authority of scientific and technical specialisation. But, thanks to the solicitude of the popularisers of knowledge and to the zeal of the propagandists, the most ignorant

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now possess enough ideas and opinions to confirm them in their self-assurance.

VI

Perhaps all this amounts to little more than foolishness. But one cannot come face-to-face with spiritual vulgarity without frequently encountering folly on the way. Both have their deepest roots in those rudimentary creeds engendered by the degradation of science and reason.

We have already remarked that the worst platitudes of the 18th century were due to its refusal to accept mystery. When Condorcet suggested that the mere improvement of language would clarify most of the misunderstandings which divide mankind, he adopted an attitude which the presumptuously materialistic "scientism" of the 19th century was to adopt still more emphatically.

"Scientism" has authorised mediocre minds to believe that science puts the whole of reality within the reach of a healthy objectivity. It has substituted the concept of the problem for the concept of mystery. To solve every enigma of life and of the universe, all that is necessary is to work out an exhaustive series of problems. In any case, analytical and experimental science is the only mode of real knowledge available to man, and a reasonable mind will ignore everything beyond the scope of scientific propositions.

Moreover, the technical successes of science, particularly those of the last three decades, have powerfully affected our ideas about life. Those successes have gradually induced us to think of living beings as mechanisms; highly delicate mechanisms certainly, but hardly more mysterious than the latest developments in self-guided missiles. Since mechanism is imitating life more and more closely, how can we doubt that it will eventually catch up with it and, consequently, explain it? Plenty of people can no longer understand that there is an insuperable barrier between a man and a robot. In one as in the other, any functional disorder comes to be regarded as a problem to be solved by the technicians. Already, to the vulgar mind, science deals with a psychological complex much as it deals with an obstruction in the bowels. And it deals with an obstruction in the bowels much as it deals with a choked carburettor.

To my mind, we can find no better example of the fine flower of this optimism than in the positively insane abuse of psychoanalysis current in America today.

If you are a poet or an artist, an American will question you avidly about the complexes which impel you to write or to paint. If you hesitate to answer, he will attribute your hesitation to some further complex. If you appear to him somewhat low-spirited, he will press you, in the most friendly way, to release your unconscious. Moreover, it is fashionable to have periodical sessions with one's analyst to be cured of one's personal complications.

Thus the life of the soul itself is practically reduced to a technical and hygienic problem and menaced at its most sensitive point. The psyche overhauls itself and readjusts itself to normal functioning under the adroit manipulation of a practitioner. Repression and sublimation are operations whose mechanism is understood by all. You can safely leave all responsibility for yourself in the competent hands of modern psychiatry which is all ready to restore you to cheerfulness, to your friends, to your work: to make you, in fact, a contented normal man. Death itself has been so completely handed over to the experts and so proficiently dealt with that it has lost nearly all its offensiveness. It has practically assumed the guise of a temporary setback in medical science.

Such is the mental state towards which an ever increasing section of humanity is tending today. You have only to extend similar ideas to politics, sex, sociology, and all the other aspects of human life to achieve the perfect world of common sense. In that world everything rests on tangible supports and nothing exists which cannot be promptly and clearly judged.

Sheltered by this optimism, Americans have developed that good-humour, affability, social ease, and frank, uninhibited simplicity which charm the European visitor the moment he sets foot in the United States. Unfortunately, folly prospers equally under the same ægis.

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It flourishes in the eternal smile with which the film stars and pin-up girls greet you on every page of our magazines.

VII

I HAVE before my eyes at this moment a collection of photographs taken in Malaya and Indonesia. They exhale a charm which depends almost entirely on the gravity and discretion of all those smooth faces; on their restraint; on the absence of triviality in their expressions and attitudes; on a kind of subjugation of the individual. It is the same gravity which captivates us in the face of a Javanese or Indian sacred dancer, in the chants of the Ruanda, and in any survival of primitive ritual whenever we can still observe it. Moreover, it is this same gravity, fraught with mystery, which we encounter more and more in art as we trace it back beyond the Renaissance towards its earliest sources.

This gravity is something we have lost. It exists among us now only as a rare and personal spiritual conquest and is no longer indigenous to the race.

Spiritual vulgarity does not necessarily imply stupidity. If we have somewhat overstressed the connection between them, it is because, among us, the self-assurance I have mentioned appears at its most glaring in a stupid man. It is in conjunction with personal insignificance and invulnerable mediocrity that it takes on that offensiveness we daily encounter with a kind of despair. Such self-assurance is so elemental that it is not even tinged with conceit or pretentiousness. It is an unblushing acceptance of a total vapidity of soul, that implicitly insults anything which might disturb it. An individual of this type is so utterly incapable of conceiving anything beyond his scope that he can be aware of it only as a possible discomfort. This is the type of man we immediately think of when we force ourselves to conjure up a concrete image of vulgarity.

However, there is also a vulgarity proper to intelligent men; an academic and scholarly vulgarity. Careful consideration shows that this rests on much the same base. Moreover, the stupid man we have mentioned may conceivably be more intelligent than he seems. Perhaps the vulgarity which his background has conspired to let loose in him has dulled his intellect and reduced a mind—which, in a society that respected it, might have been merely average—to the lowest depths.

Similarly, though to a lesser degree, vulgarity corrupts and constrains the mind of the intelligent man by depriving it of its affective overtones, just as it cripples knowledge by preventing the specialist from perceiving the delicate links which bind that knowledge to the whole range of human reality.

To sum up, we have recognised vulgarity as a historical phenomenon. In the course of centuries, vulgarity has appeared and developed side by side with the emancipation of the individual and with everything which, in the evolution of consciousness and behaviour, has favoured the complacent authority of private judgement.

Yet the realisation of these conditions is not enough to produce the vulgar man. They provide a favourable soil and they shape the prevailing and the latent vulgarity of our own day. But the vulgar man is more than a mere product of those conditions. If he is to come to full growth, both in his character and in his works, the historical phenomenon must, if I may be excused this pretentious language, encounter certain flaws in the individual. To be more precise, it must reinforce in him those natural tendencies which are propitious and responsive to it.

I have questioned a considerable number of people on the subject of vulgarity, particularly on the defects which seem to them to constitute vulgarity in a man. One woman promptly replied: "Insensitiveness." It was an admirable answer. A certain sensitiveness counteracts crudeness of judgement. A vulgar man appears, first and foremost, as lacking that tact which we acquire through sensibility and through those delicate perceptions which make us aware of another person's psychology and of the harmonies of life itself. Furthermore, insensitiveness involves a meagreness of imagination in human relations and fosters that offensive self-assurance which we invariably meet in any encounter with vulgarity.

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A politician answered: "What seems to me the basic characteristic of the vulgar man is that he is incapable of respect." Obviously he meant neither cynicism, which is a defiance of respect, nor rebelliousness, but the pure incapacity to imagine anything worthy of respect. This incapacity proceeds both from all that we have said about historical conditioning and from the flaws it implies in the individual.

VIII

VULGARITY is often attributed to industry; to the manufacture of cheap, mass-produced goods. We often hear that it is the manufacturer's lack of conscience and the shamelessness of his commercial methods which have debased the people's taste. It is a fact that this taste has now reached the lowest depths of aberration. This is displayed just as much in our churches and our pious art as in the drawing-rooms of our middle classes. It is as evident in the suburban cemetery as in the one-price chain-store.

All over Europe and America, organisations are springing up for the purpose of re-educating the æsthetic taste of the masses and bringing them back to more reasonable ideas. Appeals to reason have some chance of being listened to. But, before claiming to reform taste, one must first ask oneself why it should have become so degraded. And this cannot be explained merely by the appearance of shoddy manufactured goods. Various efforts in the field of industrial design prove clearly that elegant things can be mass-produced and sold as cheaply as hideous ones. We have to explain why cheap manufactured objects have become so revolting and why their ugliness has been so promptly and universally accepted. This would confront us with truths highly discouraging to the apostles of taste. The fact is that the secret of vulgarity lies entirely in the human soul. All that the flood of mass-production does is enormously to multiply its effects.

It would be easy to object that all this is merely another denigration of our own times, such as men have always made, and to assert with a shrug of the shoulders that humanity is neither more nor less vulgar than it has always been, and only the characteristics change. What do we know of the "vulgar men" of the Middle Ages or Antiquity? What traces could have survived?

We certainly know little about individuals. We know only their work; but their evidence is sufficient. It would not be so if we could only refer to works of art, but modern excavation has brought to light the most ordinary objects. We can observe the different styles throughout history, and we can easily pick out what was vulgar in relation to certain periods, for example, of Egyptian or Cretan history. The conclusions to be drawn from this universal comparison are depressing for the modern Western world. One would only have to take the knick-knacks from a lower-middle-class drawing-room, or a shop full of religious trinkets, and install them in an archæological museum, in order to be fully persuaded of the insignificance and absurdity into which popular taste has sunk, and the scandalous way in which such things are forced upon our sight. We may as well recognise that the phenomenon is unprecedented in human history. It is surely not without significance that the word itself, "vulgarity," should have come to be used, in its present sense, towards the end of the 18th century. The word was needed then, in a way that it had not been needed before.

(*Translated by Antonia White*)

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Vespers

If the hill overlooking our city has always been known as Adam's Grave, only at dusk can you see the recumbent giant, his head turned to the west, his right arm resting for ever on Eve's haunch,

can you learn, from the way he looks up at the scandalous pair, what a citizen really thinks of his citizenship,

just as now you can hear in a drunkard's caterwaul his rebel sorrows crying for a parental discipline, in lustful eyes perceive a disconsolate soul,

scanning in desperation all passing limbs for some vestige of her faceless angel who in that long ago when wishing was a help mounted her once and vanished:

For Sun and Moon supply conforming masks, but in this hour of civil twilight all must wear their own faces.

It is now that our two paths cross.

Both simultaneously recognise his Anti-type: that I am an Arcadian, that he is a Utopian.

He notes, with contempt, my Aquarian belly: I note, with alarm, his Scorpion's mouth.

He would like to see me cleaning latrines: I would like to see him removed to some other planet.

Neither speaks. What experience could we possibly share?

Glancing at a lampshade in a store window, I observe it is too hideous for anyone in their senses to buy: He observes it is too expensive for a peasant to buy.

Passing a slum child with rickets, I look the other way: He looks the other way if he passes a chubby one.

I hope our senators will behave like saints, provided they don't reform me: He hopes they will behave like *baritoni cattivi* and, when lights burn late in the Citadel,

I (who have never seen the inside of a police station) am shocked and think: "Were the city as free as they say, after sundown all her bureaus would be huge black stones":

He (who has been beaten up several times) is not shocked at all but thinks: "One fine night our boys will be working up there."

You can see, then, why, between my Eden and his New Jerusalem, no treaty is negotiable.

In my Eden a person who dislikes Bellini has the good manners not to get born: In his New Jerusalem a person who dislikes work will be very sorry he was born.

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by W. H. Auden

In my Eden we have a few beam-engines, saddle-tank locomotives, overshot waterwheels and other beautiful pieces of obsolete machinery to play with: In his New Jerusalem even chefs will be cucumber-cool machine minders.

In my Eden our only source of political news is gossip: In his New Jerusalem there will be a special daily in simplified spelling for non-verbal types.

In my Eden each observes his compulsive rituals and superstitious tabus but we have no morals: in his New Jerusalem the temples will be empty but all will practise the rational virtues.

One reason for his contempt is that I have only to close my eyes, cross the iron footbridge to the tow-path, take the barge through the short brick tunnel and

there I stand in Eden again, welcomed back by the krumhorns, doppions, sordumes of jolly miners and a bob major from the Cathedral (romanesque) of St. Sophie (*Die Kalte*):

One reason for my alarm is that, when he closes his eyes, he arrives, not in New Jerusalem, but on some august day of outrage when hellikins cavort through ruined drawing-rooms and fish-wives intervene in the Chamber, or

some autumn night of delations and noyades when the unrepentant thieves (including me) are sequestered and those he hates shall hate themselves instead.

So, with a passing glance we take the other's posture: Already our steps recede, heading, incorrigible each, towards his kind of meal and evening.

Was it (as it must look to any god of cross-roads) simply a fortuitous intersection of life-paths, loyal to different fibs,

or also a rendezvous between accomplices who, in spite of themselves, cannot resist meeting

to remind the other (do both, at bottom, desire truth?) of that half of their secret which he would most like to forget,

forcing us both, for a fraction of a second, to remember our victim (but for him I could forget the blood, but for me he could forget the innocence)

on whose immolation (call him Abel, Remus, whom you will, it is one Sin Offering) arcadias, utopias, our dear old bag of a democracy, are alike founded:

For without a cement of blood (it must be human, it must be innocent) no secular wall will safely stand.

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Christopher Hollis

Can Parliament Survive?

IT IS important to approach this question with neither alarm nor complacency. What exactly would take the place of Parliament in this country, should it fail to survive, it is beyond our terms of reference to speculate in detail, but I do not think that the experiments of other countries can leave us in much doubt that it would be something a great deal more unpleasant. The Mother of Parliaments may be an old nanny but there is wisdom in Belloc's adjuration that we

Always keep a hold of nurse
For fear of finding something worse.

The English tradition has been not dramatically to abolish our traditional institutions when the form of society in which they were born changes somewhat, but rather to adapt them to the new society—to keep for ourselves at once the advantages of tradition and the advantages of progress.

But at the same time we do not cure a disease by denying its existence. True conservatism has no more obstinate enemy than the false conservatism which seeks to preserve every nominal detail of an arrangement and refuses to notice that in fact, in a new society, it is working in quite a different way from that in which it worked in the old. Without delving too deeply into history or attempting to tread again in the footsteps of Sir Lewis Namier, let us recollect two very obvious, but often overlooked, facts of history—first, that Parliament is much older than Parliamentary Government, second that Parliamentary Government is much older than democracy.

The first of these facts is obviously true enough, even though there is perhaps no especially pregnant lesson for our present purpose to be drawn from it. In the Middle Ages and in Tudor times we had Parliaments, but we had in no sense anything that could be called Parliamentary Government. It was not until the Civil War that Parliamentary Government was even suggested as a possibility. It did not establish itself until the 18th century—whether we date its birth with Harley or with Walpole—and even then, as the career of George III was to show, it did not establish itself unchallenged. The school-boy story-books used to tell us that cabinet government established itself when George I did not attend the cabinet meetings because he knew no English, and Walpole was able to preside there instead, thus becoming the first Prime Minister. There is a rough justice in the anecdote, though, I think, for a different reason from that which the text-books used to suggest. There was nothing very odd, in the world of the 18th century, in a monarch who did not know the language of his subjects. All that would have happened in any other court in Europe was that the ministers would have had to learn the monarch's language in order to talk to him. It was not so in England because the Whigs had already captured the reality of power from the monarchy. George did not cease to rule England because he did not come to the cabinet meetings. He did not come to the meetings because he had ceased to rule England.

However that may be, whatever the precise date in the 18th—or even if you will, in the early 19th—century that we may choose to assign to it, the important point is that Parliamentary Government came into existence at a time when this country was nothing that in any way resembled a democracy, if by democracy we mean a country that elects its Parliament by

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something approximating to universal franchise. As a matter of fact and of history, Parliamentary Government came into existence when the country was still aristocratic and, if we can say, as I think that we fairly can, that it was not until the Reform Bill of 1884 that there was a franchise wide enough to be called democratic—even then of course there was only *male* democracy—then the devil's advocate might make a good case for it that Parliamentary Government began to decline at about the very time that the country became democratic.

PARLIAMENTARY Government came to birth in an aristocratic society. Whether such a society was a good society or a bad society, it was, like all societies, built on certain assumptions. It could be taken for granted that Members of Parliament would be of a certain nature, and government would be of a certain nature, and institutions would be shaped accordingly. Let us see what were some of the assumptions around which Parliamentary Government grew up and how far those assumptions are still valid today.

It was assumed that society would be aristocratic and inegalitarian—that is to say, that there would be a sufficiently large class of persons with independent incomes to man a House of Commons and that those people would be of such general standing in society, quite apart from their membership of Parliament, that a good proportion of them would behave with considerable independence, and not break their hearts if, as a result of their independence, they lost their seats.

It was assumed again that government would not interfere very much with the lives of the people. The political issues of their day seemed of course of enormous moment to our ancestors, and we totally misread the lesson of history if we think of them as in any way conscious that they were merely playing a game. Nevertheless, breakfast, dinner, lunch, and tea did go on much the same whether Melbourne or Peel, Gladstone or Disraeli was in power. Nothing that a government did, or that a government dreamed of doing, dramatically changed the habits of the people; in so far as those habits did change gradually over the century, this was thought to be due to a thing called Progress, in the shaping of which the government was but one, and a subsidiary, factor.

It was assumed again—and this was an assumption of gigantic importance which we can, alas, no longer make—that Britain was secure. We lived on an island. You could only get to an island in a ship, and we had more ships than anybody else. Therefore, enjoying security, we could afford a sort of carelessness which other nations could not afford. We could afford to treat it almost as a music-hall joke that in every war we lost the first battles and won the last, and there were of course solid advantages in such carelessness so long as we could afford it. It was because of our greater security—at any rate among other reasons—that we were able to develop much freer institutions than other nations whose first eye had to be on their land frontiers. It was because of our greater security that we were able to spend on peaceful industrial development money which in other nations had to be devoted to standing armies.

Now even in such a society the House of Commons was divided into parties. I have never heard of a legislature which did not have its parties and I think that anyone who has had any experience of a legislative assembly would agree that one without some sort of party organisation would be chaos. But because there was a party system in the 19th century we must not make the mistake of thinking that there was the party system of today. It was very different. The modern assumptions—that every back-bench Member of Parliament is ambitious to get on to the front bench, that every Member of Parliament must from time to time make a speech in order to satisfy his constituents—were unknown to our great-grandfathers. The debates of the House were substantially carried on by some score of chosen gladiators on the two front benches. The vast majority of Members never, or hardly ever, made a speech. Some of them, it is true, were country squires who used the House simply as a club and did not speak because they could not, but on the other hand many of the House's silent

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Members were also its most distinguished Members—members incomparably more distinguished than the greater number of its Prime Ministers and Secretaries of State. It has always been the special mark of the House of Commons that, unlike some other assemblies, it is an assembly of the nation, not merely of the nation's politicians—that there always sat upon its back benches men of eminence who had gained their experience somewhere else than in politics. Thus Addison had never made his maiden speech when he was appointed Secretary of State. Gibbon never made a maiden speech at all. Lord George Bentinck had sat in the House for nineteen years without speaking in any set debate until one day they came and told him that Peel was repealing the Corn Laws and that there was no one to speak against it except Disraeli, who was not even a gentleman. So Bentinck got up and at once established himself as one of the foremost orators of the day. In the 19th century three of the greatest of our historians sat in turn in the House of Commons. Of these the first, Macaulay, said that to be a member of the House of Commons was the highest honour known to man and then promptly accepted a peerage. The second, Lecky, said that most of the duties of a member of Parliament could be better performed by a fairly intelligent poodle dog; and the third, perhaps the wisest of all, Lord Acton, sat through three Parliaments and made no observations whatsoever. It would be indeed a foolish, superficial view to think that, because they took no public part, therefore these and other great men exercised no influence on affairs. We have only to look at the Gladstone-Acton correspondence to see how much influence Acton exercised. They were, and knew themselves to be, and they were recognised to be, persons of far greater importance than the vast majority of holders of public office. As for speaking, they argued (to adapt the phrase of de Lisle d'Adam) that "our servants will do it for us."

Their task was with judgement. As long as there were men of such a calibre sitting on the back benches, then the front benches had to argue before the back-benchers as before a jury, and that is what happened in all the great debates between the Reform Act of 1832 and that of 1867, in many ways the golden age of the House of Commons. The Reform Bill itself, the Repeal of the Corn Laws, Tit-for-Tat with John Russell, the Conspiracy to Murder Bill—in all these it was quite uncertain until the figures were announced how the division would go, and that because there were members sitting around on the back benches, listening to the debate, and refusing to commit themselves until they had heard the argument. In every division in mid-Victorian Parliaments a party-leader expected about ten per cent of his party to vote against him. He was satisfied that it was no more than that. Today the only uncertainty about a division is whether some member has or has not fallen off his bicycle on the way to the House. There is a total lack of relation between the merits of the debate and the subsequent vote—so much so that Mr. Harold Macmillan sensibly suggested the other day that it would be much more convenient for everybody to have the vote first and the debate afterwards. This excess of party discipline has of course been exaggerated beyond all sanity in the last two Parliaments with their even balance of the parties, but it had already shown itself even before that, nor is it likely automatically to rectify itself merely because another election should give one party or the other a large majority.

As a fact of history, free party discipline was very largely the consequence of the structure of 19th century society. Members were men of independent means. They did not depend for their incomes on Parliamentary salaries, nor on party machines to pay their election expenses. Sometimes, indeed, they depended on patrons and it might be argued that patronage was a greater evil than salary. But we are not at the moment concerned with balancing evils but simply with recording facts. Parliament sat only a few months in the year—there was normally no autumn session. In William IV's last Parliament, the House sat on 83 days out of the 365, of which 28 days were for Government business. The legislative programme was by modern standards very light. A high proportion of the members owed their

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membership to the distinction of their family in their particular locality and thus could not be coerced by party whips. There was therefore no compulsion of attendance. The voting in divisions was always by modern standards, small. At the same time, as few members wanted to speak, as the legislative programme was light, as in the last analysis all the members were gentlemen together, members of the same club and anxious to keep the game going, it was possible to get through the business without a closure and with a minimum of rules of procedure.

The great changes took place in the 1880's following on the extension of the franchise through the Reform Act of 1884. In so far as we can ascribe those changes to individuals, we can ascribe them to two men—Joseph Chamberlain and Parnell.

There had always been, as we have said, a party organisation in Parliament. But there had not always been nation-wide party organisations—which is a quite different affair. Up till the 1880's the candidate in the constituency stood as an individual. To what extent he identified himself with a party at his election depended on himself and his circumstances. On the whole, if his local influence was sufficiently strong to carry him to victory without very definite party affiliation, he usually preferred to keep as much independence as possible. Plantagenet Palliser, the son of Trollope's Duke of Omnium, it will be remembered, had been in Parliament for twelve years without having yet made up his mind whether he was a Whig or a Tory, and that though he was in the end destined for, and was ambitious of, high office —and Trollope was an accurate recorder of these matters. As a result, though a General Election gave a broad indication of the nation's choice as between the parties, it was never certain to a digit, when the election returns were all in, what were the strengths of the parties. No Prime Minister would have dreamed of resigning on the mere reception of election results: he waited to be dismissed by Parliament. Nor was there any means by which a Government could come into power to carry out a detailed mandate in the modern fashion, for members of Parliament would not have recognised the right of a leader or party machine to commit them to that extent.

It was Joseph Chamberlain, then of course still a Radical, who in the early 1880's brought back from America the new lessons of the machine and the endorsed candidate. Of the Birmingham machine he was so completely master that, when he changed from Radical to Unionist, he was able to carry the whole of Birmingham over with him. "We become that which we fight," as Mr. Roy Campbell has written in one of his poems, and what Chamberlain was doing for the Liberals, Sir John Gorst was at about the same time doing for the Conservatives. This change obviously has had enormous importance, so much so that today, while elections in constituencies are still nominally between individual candidates, in fact the candidates might as well be a couple of ink-pots. The overwhelming majority of electors simply vote the party ticket, irrespective of the particular candidate, and, when the election is over, the statisticians get to work and tot up how many millions throughout the nation have voted for this or that party, deriving from their calculations such conclusions as may be convenient to show that there is a mandate for this and that, or no mandate for the other. The individual candidates fade wholly out of such calculations. In 1929 Baldwin set the precedent, which has since been followed by both Mr. Attlee and Sir Winston Churchill, of resigning as soon as the full election results were in and not waiting to meet Parliament.

More important in Parliamentary history even than Joseph Chamberlain was Charles Stuart Parnell. Of Parnell's place in Irish history this is not the occasion to speak. His influence over English history was certainly enormous—greater, surely, than that of any other private member who ever sat at Westminster. There was always one great difference between the Irish Nationalist at Westminster and the English member, whether he was Liberal or Conservative. The Englishman wanted the system to work. The Irishman wanted the system not to work. Parnell's argument was "If you do not pass a Home Rule Bill, at least we will see to it that you do not pass any other

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bills." Parnell invented the policy of obstruction, imposed it upon his followers and thus compelled English governments in self-defence to submit the rules of procedure of the House, hitherto so free and flexible, to the rigid discipline of the closure. The rules were imposed and, as is the way of the world, the Irish have gone but the closure is still with us.

Now, of course, it may very reasonably be objected:

"To what purpose is all this history? Whether Joseph Chamberlain and Parnell had ever existed or not, it was inevitable that the aristocratic should give place to a democratic society, that there should be sooner or later an extension of the franchise, bringing with it the problems of a mass electorate, that the large units of industrialism should come into being, making inevitable in their turn a degree of state interference and conscious government planning that was unnecessary in our grandfathers' simple society, that with the aeroplane we should lose our special position of advantage in international affairs and be in peril. In such a society we must have strong and stable government or perish. If the state's interference is to be apparent at every turn of our lives, then it would be intolerable if its policies should be capricious. It would have been intolerable had the party machines accorded to Members of Parliament the irresponsibility that was allowed to Victorian back-benchers. Nor indeed has it really any meaning to say that Members should be allowed to vote according to their own judgement. Vastly the greater number of votes that a Member of Parliament casts are votes upon detailed committee points or highly technical bills upon which only he who has specially interested himself can possibly have a judgement. If he had not a whip to guide him, the Member would have no notion what to do. If you want to know what it is like to try to govern a modern state with an undisciplined Parliament you have only to look at France."

This is, as far as it goes, a perfectly sensible argument. For every one of the curtailments of Parliamentary liberty there are solid arguments of public interest. We need not invent any hypothesis of power-drunk tyrants to account for them. All that is true, but on the other hand if all that is the whole truth, if there is not only need for a disciplined state but no need for anything except a disciplined state, then there is clearly no need for Parliament. It might as well be abolished, or, if you will, in the more common English fashion, preserved as mere ceremony, shorn of all political function—a kind of picturesque Beefeaters. After all, the broad lesson of history is that democracy is perhaps one of the best of all forms of government but it is also one of the most short-lived. It has often been tried but it has never lasted long. Are we prepared in Spenglerian fashion to accept its decay as inevitable? Surely never was there a state in which experience has shown that it was less safe to entrust absolute power to its masters—in which the corrupting effects of power were more evident—than the modern industrial state.

There are reforms in procedure and custom that are worth considering. One of the evils of the modern system is certainly the excessive strength of party discipline. If the set party debates are wooden and tedious formalities, the reason is not that Members of Parliament are without exception wooden and tedious persons, but that the debates themselves are foregone conclusions—that, however the argument may go, it is already settled how the division will go at the end of it—that all too often, so far from the party clash bringing out the true arguments for and against a policy, on the contrary both parties have skeletons which they wish to keep in their cupboards and the party debate is an elaborate mock battle about secondary matters, while the real issues are kept studiously away from public notice. "The best party," said Lord Halifax, the Trimmer, "is but a kind of conspiracy against the rest of the nation," and it obviously follows that two parties are two kinds of conspiracies against the rest of the nation. Members of Parliament are nominally representatives of the people, the one party the sworn enemy of the other. But the Members of the different parties live the same life. They

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are, to repeat, members of the same club. It is inevitable that up to a point they should come to see themselves as persons banded together to keep in existence a certain form of life, the peculiar virtues of which they appreciate from experience, in face of a philistine public which is not sufficiently respectful of it. As the French say, "There is much more in common between two deputies one of whom is a communist, than there is between two communists one of whom is a deputy."

That Members of Parliament can do better than that, when they are given the chance, is amply proved by their performance on the few occasions when they have been given the chance. To this day many, whose interests lie quite outside such a topic, speak of the debate on the revised Prayer Book as the best debate that the House has known in modern times—and that, of course, precisely because no whips were on, the vote was free, the result uncertain, and speeches might have some effect on votes. In more recent times, the two most interesting debates have certainly been the debates on capital punishment and on Sunday opening of the Festival of Britain Fun Fair, where again there were no whips. The only political debate of modern times that was at all memorable was the debate that brought down the Chamberlain Government. It was memorable because the situation was so serious that for once members were not willing to be merely obedient to a whip. They spoke out their minds, and a number of them voted according to their minds.

We criticise—and heaven knows that we have cause enough to criticise—French Parliamentary antics, but it must at least be recognised that the instability of French Governments makes debates in the French Assembly a great deal more interesting than debates in the House of Commons. When it comes to that, debates in the House of Lords are a great deal more interesting than debates in the House of Commons, because they are freer—and they are freer because the fate of the government is not at stake on the result.

Everyone who has any understanding of the system knows that to talk of a total abolition of party discipline is nonsense. No Prime Minister could be expected to take responsibility for the government of the country unless he had some assurance that he would be able to carry through the measures which he believed to be necessary for the country's salvation. But there is a question of degree in these matters. Need the whips be put on for every detail of a measure? Is not too much made a matter of confidence? Could not free votes be more frequent? Obviously they could. Obviously, without at all destroying discipline or surrendering to anarchy, the two front benches could greatly relax party discipline if they wished. It would be to some extent an inconvenience to them, but not an impossibility.

In the same way Members of Parliament could show a greater independence if they received some sort of support from their constituents in doing so, but of course they receive none. The vast majority of constituents care nothing at all who are the candidates that appear before them at elections. The candidates are selected by small caucuses, to whom any breach of party disloyalty is anathema, and the electors make their choice between the two party nominees, placing quite automatically and hopelessly at the bottom of the poll any independent candidate, quite irrespective of what may be his views. They do this because, as they say, to give their vote to an independent or even to a liberal—to anyone who is not a member of one of the government-forming parties—would be to waste it, by which they show quite clearly that what they think they are doing is not electing a Parliament but electing a Government.

We are sometimes told that it is an exaggeration to argue simply from the evidence of the division lists that the Member of Parliament is a mere robot. True, we are told, by the time the matter gets to the floor of the House it is rare indeed that a Member opposes his party-line, but in private—or supposedly private—committee upstairs he has had great freedom to criticise and perhaps to vote, to make clear his discontent with the suggested party policy and perhaps to change it. That is perfectly true as a fact and perfectly unsatisfactory as a solution. A greater violence to the tradition of the English constitution could hardly be imagined,

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and nothing more alarming than the widespread lack of alarm at it. The tradition of the constitution is that the elector (since the introduction of the ballot) has indeed the right to give his vote secretly, but the Member of Parliament must give his vote publicly—in the eyes of the public and his constituency. Nothing could be more evil and more revolutionary than the acceptance of a custom by which the Member's vote in the division lobby was accepted as a mere formality and his real vote was given in the secrecy of a committee-room and behind closed doors. Happily, the persistent habit of a few Members who communicate to the press the happenings of confidential party meetings has prevented the growth of a custom of total Parliamentary secrecy.

THERE are also reforms of formal procedure which are worth considering. The all-night sitting is clearly an open scandal, if Parliament is to be taken seriously at all. It is not merely a question of the inconvenience and unpleasantness to Members, compelled, as Sir George Trevelyan has written in *An Ancient Greek War*, to transact their business "at an hour when all honest men should be in bed—at an hour when, if we are to believe some cynics, all honest men are in bed." When I served on the Lord Chancellor's committee for the reform of County Court procedure, everybody was agreed that, whatever other changes might be introduced, it would be the worst of errors if, in a foolish hope of saving time, judges were asked to sit for inordinately long hours. If they did so, they would merely give bad judgements. More injustice would be done and in the end more time would be wasted. Why is the same argument not applied to Members of Parliament? Obviously because what the judges say makes some difference and what the Members of Parliament say makes no difference. At half-past three in the morning of a Finance Bill debate, bleary-eyed Members of Parliament troop through the division lobbies to vote away some hundreds of millions of public money, most of them without the foggiest notion what it is that they are voting about. If they really were taking the decision at that time and in these circumstances, it would be a scandal of such dimensions that not even public opinion—which will tolerate almost anything—would tolerate it. But, of course, as everybody very well knows, the decision has been taken between the Minister and his expert civil service advisers—long before the debate started—as to which amendments would be accepted and which rejected. The course of the debate was quite irrelevant to the decision, and the result of the division which was to follow it a foregone conclusion.

There is purpose in question-time, which should certainly be preserved, but the time spent today on Committee of the whole House is almost entirely wasted. It is nearly a century since Bagehot gave his pungent description of a Committee of the whole House engaged on a "Bill of many clauses" as "one of the most hopeless exhibitions of helpless ingenuity and wasted mind," and since Bagehot's day bills have become steadily more complicated and more technical. The twenty members, ten on each side, who have interested themselves in the amendment, mumble through their debate in the empty Chamber. After a time the division bell rings. In troop the other six hundred with no notion what the question is, ask of their whip "Which side are we?" and file into the appropriate division lobby.

THE remedies are three. In the first place Parliament is far too large. Its numbers should be dramatically reduced. There should be many fewer debates, those on large matters of policy, and the scandal of the all-night sitting abolished. With the reduced numbers, a Member would always be able to speak in a debate whenever he wished. There would be none of the frustration of "getting called."

The second reform would be that no bills should ever be considered in a Committee of the whole House. It is a farcical procedure. All bills should go upstairs to a standing committee. The debates of some forty chosen Members, selected in proportion to the parties, in the intimate atmosphere of a committee-room, have a much greater freedom and reality than those on the floor of the House and are far better suited for the consideration of detailed amendments to a bill. There is a

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great deal to be said for returning to the old tradition of two-Member constituencies, one Member elected to serve on the floor of the House and the other on its committees.

In the third place, the simple remedy for too much legislation is less legislation. Where this is possible, it is admirable, and doubtless laws have been passed for which the easy remedy would have been just to have no law. But unfortunately, with all the will in the world, there is not much prospect that we will solve our problems thus. We must deal with the world as it is, and there is clearly no chance in our immediate future that, whatever party may come into power, the Government will not take a considerable amount of interest in the details of our industrial organisation. The Conservatives have, it is true, shown themselves prepared for certain measures of denationalisation, but denationalisation in their philosophy by no means implies saying to steel or to road transport, "Go off and manage your own affairs." There is as much Government regulation and organisation in Conservative denationalisation as in Socialist nationalisation.

Therefore the Government will certainly continue to have a lot to do with industry in the years to come, and the detailed control of industry is a task for which Parliament is singularly incompetent. That being so, the only way to get responsibility and efficiency in industry and at the same time to relieve the pressure on Parliament is by extensive devolution to subsidiary legislative bodies. We must take a leaf out of the constitution of the Church of England. Just as, by the Enabling Act, the Church of England is allowed through its own Assembly to legislate for its own affairs, subject only to the overriding veto of Parliament, so similar assemblies of those expert in various industries must be established for those industries. It should be in these assemblies that the details of measures, each for its own industry, will be debated and passed—subject again to an overriding veto of Parliament, to be used if Parliament fears that the measures threaten general national policy. Delegated legislation is dangerous, but it is probably inevitable, and if we must have delegated legislation at least let us have delegated legislators. By such measures many more people will have to do a certain amount of politics and nobody will have to do quite as much politics as the professional politician does today. And that is all to the good. For no system could be less egalitarian and less democratic than a system in which six-hundred-odd people are whole-time professional politicians and the other fifty million confine their activities to putting a cross against a printed name once in five years, which is what we are drifting to if we allow ourselves to drift.

BOTH the disease and the remedy are much more a matter of men than of measures. It is common enough to hear lamentations these days on the hardships of a politician's life. But these lamentations usually miss the point and concentrate only on what is secondary. It is doubtless often boring to have to hang around the House for inordinate hours on end. The remuneration is inadequate. But the real point is that Parliament cannot flourish unless it has vigorous, able, and independent Members of integrity on its back benches, and people cannot be expected to give up their time to sit on the back benches if party discipline is so strict that they can never express any opinion of their own, if the front-benchers take up so much time of the debate that the back-bencher rarely has the opportunity of expressing an opinion at all, if Parliament sits for such long hours and for so large a proportion of the year that the Member can neither earn a living outside the House nor—what is even more important—maintain those contacts outside the House which are essential if he is to remain an ordinary citizen and not become a professional politician, taking the professional politician's point of view. Parliament is like county cricket. It cannot go on unless you can get a certain number of amateurs to play it.

Burke, in one of his letters to the French Constituent Assembly, explains that the reason why England is so much better governed than France is that in England all Members of Parliament have two-thirds of the year holiday. To be bothering all the time about political manœuvres—in a world in which the vast majority of your fellow-citizens do not bother

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about them at all—makes you, to begin with, a very unrepresentative person, however many thousands of obedient electors may have given you their cross; and, if continued too long, it turns you in the end, to be quite candid, just a trifle mad. For better or for worse, the aristocratic society has passed away. For better or for worse the telephone has, I fear, come to stay. No modern statesman can again ever hope to enjoy the sort of peace that Disraeli used to enjoy, in whose letters from Hughenden one may read again and again how, when Prime Minister, he has not seen a soul, or has not seen a soul except for his wife, for the last three weeks. Yet this problem of leisure is not insoluble if we want to solve it. Much of the activities of politicians—the continual circus of speech-making—is after all quite unnecessary and could perfectly well be dropped, to nobody's loss. Nobody wants it. When Chamberlain launched his tariff reform campaign it meant that he made six public speeches between October and Christmas, and everybody said that it was no wonder he should collapse after such a strain. I have heard a modern agent complain of a Cabinet Minister that he jibbed at making seven speeches in a week-end.

An electoral system can only work if the elector has a picture of that to which he is electing. If the unit is too large and too distant, the machinery of election becomes a mere formality, the process of democracy unreal. As Mr. G. D. H. Cole has most truly written:

> What remains of democracy dissolves before the Governmental machine. For democracy's essence lies less in choosing the deputy than in knowing him. Villages are for that reason more democratic places than cities, even when the squire and the parson direct the voting. Being democratic is not the same thing as professing advanced opinions or believing in democracy. Democracy begins in a man knowing his neighbours as real people, and, unless it begins there, it does not begin at all.

Our task is to teach our institutions how to relax and to shape themselves so that they become obedient, not to abstract and doctrinaire formulæ, but to the imagination of the people.

Richard Eberhart

Words

First a word was fuzzy, and was nothing.
It had all India in fee.
It had to do with illusion's very self
And nothing to do with me.

Then a word was mighty, and flew away,
An eagle on a rocky shelf;
It glowered over our America,
Depleting the inner self.

Finally a word was elegant and sheer,
Like the fabric of a stuff
Durable with the fate of things,
When I had lived enough.

Then I had a total myth
Sounding on an eternal shore.
It was the world-memory alone
When I was dead and gone.

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Three Poems by Roy Fuller

TO POSTERITY?

I wonder, noting down this opening line,
If what will follow's that unlikely freak—
The verse that must outlast my life and speak
To those unborn and send along their spine
The chill delicious hand that now I feel,
Truth in its ravishing mask of the ideal.

So that the composition need not show
The velvet nude or great empurpled sky
But merely what at present meets my eye:
The promising pen and paper in the glow
Of lamplight wars occasionally permit;
The books unburnt; the living flesh unhit.

This moment—reaching out towards the box
Of cigarettes, the brass-augmented theme
Announced upon the radio—is the dream
That I would wish to cheat the racing clocks,
Dials that mark the vital seventy years,
The culture's thousand, the coming lustrum's fears.

Though in such moment there of course will be
A sense of time undreamt of even by these:
Ages piled on the planet's flank that freeze
With inconceivable immobility;
And far back in the wastes the tiny span
Of the erect and big-brained Primate, man.

ON GRAZING A FINGER

In time and place such wounds are staggered;
Healing, too, holds them in dominion.
I am most thankful: under the surface
A ghastly thing moves on its skeleton.

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DIALOGUE OF THE POET AND HIS TALENT

Poet

I give you this calm, star-thick night of spring,
A hooting owl that freezes in mid-air
The foreleg of the cat; a garden where
You may make courteous contact, like a king,
With lower life; and in the house an earth
Of anxiety and love, with some escape
Through sleep into that country of your birth
Where the desire can summon up the shape.

Talent

And these could be enough: I want to use
That almost-face, those other worlds; the small
Existences that parody the tall;
The holy family, the dream's excuse.
But I demand from you an attitude—
What Burckhardt called the Archimedean point
Outside events, perhaps—in which the crude
World and my words would marry like a joint.

Poet

How well I know your wish! It is my own.
To be committed or to stand apart:
Either would heal the wound. Alas, my heart,
Too cowardly, too cold, is always blown
By gusts of revulsion from the self and aim
Of simple man, yet sharing in his fate
It cannot calmly watch the stupid game
With the moon's irony, the orbit's state.

Talent

Then I must be content with images:
At worst the eye's own coloured stars and worms,
At best all the reflective mind affirms;
Wishing to people steppe, metropolis
And littoral, yet only finding room
To note inadequately on my pages
The senseless cataclysms of their doom;
While coiled in others sleep new words, new ages.

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Francis King

So Hurt and Humiliated

At twenty-two Rosamund Dangerfield was a girl for whom everything had always gone well. She was attractive and not unintelligent; she had money to spend; and her undeviating obedience to the opinions of her father saved her from any of the doubts and questions which so often plague the young. Yet there were times when she had to admit to herself a certain dissatisfaction which she could not explain. There were even times when she caught herself in the strangest of fantasies; of being humiliated or in pain or profoundly unhappy. All this was morbid, she knew; and yet that year in Egypt such thoughts continually oppressed her, so that when she met Jean-Paul Nimr she had the feeling of having come to the mouth of a dark tunnel which she had often already explored in her dreams.

He was a tall youth, with curiously light blue eyes under the darkest of eyebrows, features almost monotonous in their grave regularity, and a sinuous grace of movement which would have made him conspicuous anywhere but in the Eastern Mediterranean. He was wearing a cream silk shirt with a "Lord Byron" collar that revealed the gold chain he wore round his neck. His shoes were of white suède, and his belt was of crocodile. He gave an impression both of wealth and of unreliability; and Rosamund could not help comparing him with Robert Burnett in whose office she met him, since Robert was so obviously both reliable and poor.

"And here is Colonel Dangerfield's daughter," Robert greeted her as she came in from the library. "Hello, Rosamund. Monsieur Nimr has been asking about his examination board for his scholarship. So I told him that your father would be the Chairman, and that I have nothing to do with it. . . . Monsieur Nimr, Miss Dangerfield."

As he introduced them, he made a gesture with his plump hands which looked as if he were passing invisible plates between them. His ordinary, decent face was red and shiny with the heat, and even the cow-lick into which he brushed his sandy hair seemed to be damp.

"How is it we have not met before, Miss Dangerfield?" Nimr asked, as he bowed over her hand.

"Should we have met?"

He laughed. "Why not? Anyway, I hope we shall meet again." He looked down at the gold watch on his wrist: "I must go, Robert. I have to play tennis with the daughters of the American Admiral. Do you play tennis?" He turned back to Rosamund, and as the light of the setting sun fell on his cheek-bone the skin looked so smooth that she wondered if it were perhaps powdered.

"Sometimes."

"Then we must play together."

"Really, what impudence!" Robert exclaimed, as soon as the Syrian's footsteps on the stone passage outside could no more be heard. His face expressed the mixture of bewilderment and hurt feelings which seemed to be his most usual response to events at the Academy. "Do you know why that chap came to see me?"

"No." Rosamund shifted a pile of exam papers and perched on Robert's desk. "Why?"

"He's in for a scholarship. So, as he sings

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in my madrigal group, he thought that he would persuade me to give him a helping hand. Extraordinary, isn't it?"

Rosamund laughed, but she realised that Robert, who was fiddling with the tops of the pens and pencils that stuck out of the pocket of his crumpled linen jacket, was far from amused.

"I find it sickening. I don't want to see the chap again—even though he has got a damned good voice."

"But surely, Robert, there's nothing wrong with that sort of thing in this country. Everyone does it."

"Not at my school."

"No, of course not. But it's silly to feel aggrieved if someone makes a mistake. Daddy's always having to return presents. I was pretty sick the other day, I can tell you, when he made me refuse a bracelet."

"Oh, I suppose you're right." A drop of sweat ran down Robert's cheek and trickled on to his collar. "I know Jean-Paul's one idea is to get himself to England. And really he's the best of this year's candidates."

"I should have thought he was rich enough to go to England without any help."

"Rich? Good God, no! He's nothing but a clerk in a coal business."

"But I thought—he *looks* so . . ."

"Oh, like all of them, he puts all his worldly wealth on his back—or into his teeth." Robert's teeth, which were blue where they had not been stained brown by his pipe, had obviously never received the same lavish treatment. "I can bet you that there was probably a lunch of bread and olives under that expensive belt. No, Jean-Paul's not rich. But you'll find him wherever the rich go."

They continued to talk about other subjects, until the bell rang for Robert's class; then Rosamund wandered out into the heat of the afternoon. She walked the few yards that separated the Academy from the Yacht Club, but seeing her friends seated in groups of five or six under the gaudily striped umbrellas of the terrace, she merely waved back to them as they waved to her and continued on her way. Soon the road up which she was drifting petered out in a jungle of barbed wire, corrugated-iron sheds and piles of rusty tin-cans. Three old women, shrouded in black, sat and gossiped in the doorway of an old Army Nissen hut and hid their faces behind dirt-seamed hands as they saw her approach. A goat was cropping the yellow vegetation that sprouted in a dried-up watercourse, while nearby, a couple of half-naked boys rolled in the dust. They seemed to be wrestling; but as Rosamund walked past them she realised to her horror that they were doing something obscene. Then all her desire to explore this part of the town—it was called Turbeh, because there was a tomb on the hill, supposedly of a Ptolemaic king—suddenly died within her. She became aware of the flies that she had repeatedly to brush from her lips; of an odour, sweet and clinging as chloroform, that tainted the air; of the hostility or the weary indifference on the faces of those she passed. Hurrying now, she stumbled over the stones of the unmade road as she returned to the Yacht Club.

Yet her dissatisfaction persisted. Here she was, a week later, with three pink-faced young men who worked under her father, and two girls, one from the Academy and the other from the Consulate. She knew that if she said something intended to be funny, the others would laugh; probably they would be genuinely amused—it was not hard to amuse them—but even if they were not amused, they would laugh none-the-less. She would dance with Willy, the young lieutenant who was differentiated from the two pink-faced young men by his small, clipped moustache, and she knew that it would be easy to arouse him to a pitch of physical excitement that he would find almost intolerable. When she wanted the orchestra to play the Arab dances which the Egyptians never wanted, she would only have to mention this fact and the dances would be played. Such was the importance of Colonel Dangerfield; and, to be fair to herself, such was her charm.

One of the other young men was telling a long and confused story about a trip he had made into Yugoslavia, when the back axle of his car had broken, and the girl from the Consulate was repeating: "Oh, but how awful! How too, too awful!" She had only come to

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Egypt from South London two months ago, but she had already mastered the idiom, if not the accent, of this set.

A hand rested lightly on Rosamund's shoulder: "Mademoiselle." She turned round and looked up; Nimr was behind her. "May I have this dance?"

"Will you excuse me?" Rosamund said to her party. She knew that as soon as she had left the table, they would all forget the axle broken in "Jugland" and start questioning each other about the Syrian stranger. They would remark on the flashiness of his white shark-skin dinner-jacket and on the blood-stone which he wore in a ring on his little finger. She would be lucky if the word "gigolo" were not used.

"You looked so bored," Jean-Paul said. "And I was bored too." There was a kind of sensual languor in his voice. "Were you bored?"

"No, of course not." Rosamund, never disloyal to her friends and countrymen, all but snapped out her answer.

They danced on in silence; and really, she thought, how wonderful it was to be partnered by someone whose hands were not sticky, whose feet did not shuffle, and whose breath did not hiss audibly in one's ear. Yet at the same time she felt the kind of sickness that overcame her when she spent too long in the sun; the same kind of sickness she had experienced that afternoon when she had hurried back from Turbeh.

"Do you like this tune?" Jean-Paul was asking.

"Yes. Do you?"

He grinned. "Just the job." The phrase, which she knew he must have picked up during the war, seemed to have acquired an even more jarring vulgarity when spoken by him. "I love everything English, you know. Your English waltzes, your English books, your English food. . . ." He looked down at her and squeezed her hand as he added: "And, of course, your English girls."

Really it was insufferable; and yet, spoken in that sensuously languorous voice of his, the words had a power to which some mysterious part of her being was forced to respond. She felt revulsion, certainly, and even a kind of horror; and yet she was being drawn into the tunnel with a no less certain fascination.

"May I not have the next dance too?"

"No, I'm sorry. You see, I am with a party of friends."

"Ah, those young officers who dance in their walking-shoes—and the women with too much powder on their faces?"

She turned away at this insolence, but he caught her arm and said: "Then another evening you must come out with me. Yes?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"I shall telephone you."

COLONEL DANGERFIELD did not like his daughter to go out alone or with strangers. Once, during the riots in Caesarea, someone had fired a shot at him in a restaurant, and since then he had received a number of those threatening anonymous letters that are so freely sent in Egypt. He was a man apparently hearty and careless, but in fact of an almost morbid sensibility, and it was now fixed in his mind that the town was full of people determined to "get" either him or his daughter. Rosamund was his only child, and he lavished on her the affection which an inner timidity prevented him from bestowing on his men. People said that he was "friendly" and "charming"; but they realised, after they had known him for a little, that his friendliness and charm were no more than an effort to keep on good terms with a world which he both disliked and dreaded.

On the night that Rosamund was invited out by Jean-Paul, the Colonel insisted that his driver would take her to "Les Amitiés Françaises," wait there for her and then drive her back.

The evening began with Jean-Paul indulging in a kind of banter which perpetually hovered on the verge either of insolence or impropriety. Rosamund told herself that conversation of this kind often passed for wit between men and women in the Levant, and that she was being insular to resent it. They were sitting alone together at a table in a corner of the square, high-ceilinged room, and from time to time they would get up to dance to the clatter and twang of an ancient cottage-piano. Few people whom Rosamund knew came to the

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French League, which was considered socially inferior to the Yacht Club, and since Jean-Paul's conversation revealed a persistent, if muted, snobbery she could only suppose that he had brought her here because it cost so little. At ten o'clock, however, Robert appeared in dusty grey flannels and open-necked khaki shirt, a pipe in his mouth, and joined them while his wife danced with a teacher from the Academy. He was obviously surprised at finding Rosamund with Jean-Paul.

Soon after he had sat down, one of his students, a beautiful girl, walked past and said good evening both to him and to Rosamund. Jean-Paul looked after her, and then turning his glass of "arak" in the fingers of his left hand, he murmured a word in Arabic; his enormous, dark eyes under the gracefully arched eyebrows were fixed on the drink.

"What did you say?" Robert asked in incredulity; he spoke Arabic fluently.

"Oh, nothing." Jean-Paul now looked up at them and laughed. "I know that girl."

"You had no right to say what you did." Robert tweaked the bulbous end of his nose between his finger and thumb—a gesture habitual to him when he was annoyed or nervous.

"Oh, everyone knows that she does as much business as the Suez Canal," Jean-Paul said airily.

There was a silence during which Robert's face reddened; then he pushed back his chair, said a curt "Goodnight, Rosamund" and made his way back to his own table.

"Oh, you English—you are so *prim*! But I love it; I love your primness; yes, really, I love it. And probably our Mr. Robert Burnett knows that girl better than any man in this room." At this point Jean-Paul smiled at Rosamund and, unbelievably, gave an outrageous wink.

"I think I must be going."

"Going!" He looked at his watch. "But it is not yet eleven."

"The car is waiting, and I mustn't keep the driver up too late. . . . My father is very strict." As she added this, she felt guilty of a disloyalty to the tall, white-haired man with the broken nose and the shrapnel-marks on his cheek, who, at this moment, sat in his study reading Cavafis as he waited for her return.

For a while Jean-Paul and she argued, until, with a shrug of his shoulders, he gave way and helped her with her coat. But when they were out in the street, he said: "Just come and look at the sea. There is a full moon; the water will be beautiful. . . . Look, your driver is sleeping. Why do you want to wake him? He is probably dreaming of his sweetheart who is waiting for him on some far-off island. Yes"— he peered into the Daimler—"he is even smiling as he dreams."

Rosamund knew that the driver was already unhappily married, but she did not spoil the illusion.

"Oh, very well," she said.

The sea was indeed as beautiful as Jean-Paul had said. Here, along the quay, the air was heavy with the aroma of lemons piled high on the bobbing feluccas. From the deck of one felucca a cigarette glowed; from another floated a song, followed by gusts of ribald laughter. The moon was low, the sky full of stars.

"Do you think that same moon is shining over England?"

"Why not?" Rosamund answered tartly. "There is only one moon, isn't there?"

"Ah, you are so unromantic," Jean-Paul sighed, taking her hand in his. "But I am Syrian, and I am romantic. And I would like to say to the moon, 'Moon, little moon, take a message for me to England. As you shine over the green meadows, tell her that a Syrian, Jean-Paul Nimr, dreams much of her, and loves her, and will come one day to visit her'." The extravagance of this apostrophe seemed absurd to Rosamund: and the absurdity seemed somehow to be increased by Jean-Paul's pronunciation of the first syllable of "meadow" to rhyme with "bead."

But there was nothing absurd about the kiss that then followed, on the vast, deserted quay, with the lights winking out of the darkness, the air heavy with the scent of lemons, and the body of the young Syrian crudely insistent through his summer clothes.

They walked back to the car in a silence which Rosamund only broke as he opened the

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door for her: "Can't I give you a lift? Do you live far away?"

"Yes, far away. I shall take the tram."

"But surely—where do you live?"

"Oh, in one of the suburbs. You must go alone like a fairy princess, in your carriage. The tram is good enough for me, a mere mortal."

When the car was moving, nausea suddenly swept over Rosamund in wave after choking wave. She looked for her bag to get herself a cigarette; and when she found that she had not got it with her, it was a measure of her distrust of Jean-Paul that she should, for a moment, imagine that he had taken it. Then she realised that she had probably left it at "Les Amitiés Françaises," and she called to the driver to take her back.

On their return journey they passed the tram stop and Rosamund saw that Jean-Paul was still waiting; he had lit a cigarette, and his shark-skin dinner jacket gleamed through the darkness. The bag was, as she had expected, by their table at the League, and now once again the powerful car was carrying her to her home. This time there was a tram at the stop, and Jean-Paul was boarding it; he did not hurry, but took a last puff at his cigarette, threw it into the gutter, and then swung himself on to the platform. Rosamund first waved, but he obviously did not see her; afterwards she turned, as the car swept past, and looked from the back window.

Across the front of the tram was the single word "Turbeh." Sparks scattered down from the long metallic arm as the mustard-coloured box lurched through the darkness.

WHEN, two days later, Rosamund was again driven down to meet Jean-Paul at the League, he at once said: "Look, this League is so boring. Let us walk up to the old fortifications and watch the sun set. There is a tavern there where they play Arab music and do the old Arab dances."

"It sounds marvellous. But really I don't think we'd better. Daddy fusses terribly, and he's told the driver that he's to see that I spend the evening here. The driver isn't even allowed to go away and come back."

"But that's absurd!"

"Is it? Yes, I suppose it is."

"Look—wait a moment!" Jean-Paul made for the car.

"What are you going to do?"

He gave his brilliant smile as he replied: "Just wait and see." He had drawn out his wallet.

He and the driver whispered together, Jean-Paul leaning in at the window of the car, for a few seconds; then he returned to announce: "Well, that's all right."

"All right? What do you mean?"

"How do you say in English—'money always talks'."

Rosamund made as if to go to the car; her mouth was already open to tell the driver to stay, to order him to give back Jean-Paul's bribe, and to threaten to report him to her father. But with the gentlest of swerves the gleaming grey-and-black Daimler had already turned the corner and had passed from their sight. And, in her heart, Rosamund knew that she was glad this had happened.

STRANGELY, their path to the fortifications was that up which she wandered on the day she had first met Jean-Paul; and since she now guessed that he must live here at Turbeh, it was with difficulty that she restrained herself from asking him to show her his house. But she knew, as they passed these endless avenues of corrugated-iron shacks, that he would feel ashamed if she did so; perhaps he might even imagine that she had returned that night in the car deliberately to spy on him. "Oh, how ugly it is here," he kept exclaiming. "How ugly it is!" He wrinkled up his nose in what she could only suppose was a genuine disgust; and then she pitied him both for his poverty and for having to maintain this pretence of riches.

All at once they were passing the dried-up water-course where she had seen the two half-naked boys; and though such frankness would, in the past, have been wholly alien to her nature, she now began to tell him of her experience. She told it not as a joke, but as something squalid and shocking; and therefore she felt it insensitive of him both to guffaw and then to exclaim: "Poor devils! . . . You see, they are too poor to have any toys with which to play."

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Once again he had revealed the thread of coarseness which seemed to her so often to run through the characters of even the most civilised Levantines.

Perhaps it was her annoyance at this remark that made her feel, when they at last reached the fortifications, that the view was not worth the climb; or perhaps that evening the sunset, usually so magnificent over the bay, was in truth a disappointment. There were wisps of grey cloud, tinged at the edges with the dullness of copper, but the sun itself was lost, and the islands in the gulf drifted in an ever-deepening haze. A wind had risen to parch the already dry skin and to whirl dust into the eyes and on to the lips. Within the fortifications there was a stretch of baked mud where some youths were playing football. Rosamund and Jean-Paul stopped to watch them, but there was something oppressive in their tattered clothes and savage, absorbed faces under darkly matted hair, and soon they hurried on.

What came next had all the hideous fascination of Rosamund's half-waking fantasies. At last she had reached the end of the tunnel, and as she lay, eyes wide in horror, under the shadow of a ruined buttress, while far off she could hear the football still thudding back and forth in the dimming light of evening, it seemed to her that she had known and suffered all this before and that, in some strange way, this experience now, for all its overwhelming horror and pain and beauty, was but a copy or a memory of another experience, at another time, in another place.

As they walked back down the hill, Jean-Paul said: "Tomorrow I have my board." He put his arm round her.

"What board?"

"For my scholarship to England. Don't you remember? Your father will be chairman."

"Oh, yes, yes."

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could win? I hear that next month you and your father will go. That is true, is it?"

"Yes. We shall go." She felt a curious disinterestedness; but she did not yet know if this were the disinterestedness of extreme happiness or of extreme despair.

"I *must* win the scholarship. Otherwise I should never see you again, after you leave." Suddenly she realised that as they walked, arms linked, his body was trembling. "You will speak to your father, won't you?"

"Speak to him? What do you mean?"

"Oh, you know how to do it. Tell him how much I want to visit England—tell him that you like me. If you *do* like me," he added with a grin.

"But Jean-Paul, you don't understand——" She stopped, dismayed both at his inability to understand and at hers to explain.

"You want me to come to England, don't you?"

"Yes, of course, but——"

"Well, then, speak to your father." As he spoke these words his voice was gentle and pleading; and yet the pressure of his arm about her waist seemed to express all the desperate urgency of a life-time.

"You're home very late." Her father rose to his feet as she came into the study; but before he accepted her kiss, he was careful to slip a used envelope between the pages of his book, so that he could again find his place. "What have you been up to?" His scarred face, with its broken boxer's nose would have looked brutal in the transverse beam of the reading-lamp were it not for the diffidently unhappy expression of the small green eyes. "What have you been up to?"

"It's only just eleven o'clock, father." She felt afraid to place her lips on his forehead, as though, from the mere touch of them, he could guess that another's lips had rested there. "What have you been doing?"

"Oh, I drowsed off while I was reading this book." He gave an involuntary shiver, although even in a dressing-gown and pyjamas one could not feel cold on a summer night like this. "I must get up early tomorrow, I have this wretched board."

"What board?"

"Oh, it's these scholarships; they always get an outsider to be Chairman. Damned nuisance really."

"I think that must be what Jean-Paul was talking about."

"Jean-Paul?" He reopened his book and

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looked down at the page, as though he were quickly reading something of importance; then he gazed up at her: "And who is Jean-Paul?"

"This Syrian I was with tonight. He's trying for a scholarship. Jean-Paul Nimr."

"Oh, I see." He laughed, and closed the book with a snap. "Has he been making love to you in order to get a scholarship?"

"What on earth do you mean? No, of course not. You know that we spent the evening at the League." She was afraid now and wondered whether her father knew about the bribe to the driver: the man might, conceivably, have confessed.

"Don't take it so seriously," the Colonel reassured her. "Can't you see a joke? . . . Who is this Nimr anyway?"

"Oh, I don't know. He's a friend of Robert Burnett; he sings in his madrigal group. He seems extremely intelligent and charming. I should have thought he was very much the kind of person it would pay to send to England."

Colonel Dangerfield smiled; it was a lopsided smile because of the tautness of the skin where shrapnel had marked him. "That we shall see tomorrow, shan't we?" He went and fastened each of the study windows with an unhurried deliberation, and then turned back to her: "Well, goodnight, old girl."

"Goodnight, father." Again her lips touched his forehead; and again she suffered the irrational dread that by this contact she would betray all the events of the evening.

Colonel Dangerfield went out and Rosamund could hear him whistling softly to himself, *Leise, leise,* as he climbed the stairs to bed.

JEAN-PAUL was alone on the terrace of the Yacht Club. He sat on one chair, his feet were on another, and his right arm dangled over the back of a third. Every five minutes he would take a sip from his glass of Coca-Cola. He wanted it to last him until he went home to dinner.

"Jean-Paul!" Rosamund had stepped off the yacht of a friend and now ran over. But as she approached, in white shorts and blouse, she noticed how slowly he removed his legs from the chair; how slowly and how faintly he smiled; and how reluctantly he heaved himself up to greet her. "How did the Board go?"

He looked at her, and his face seemed yellow and strained. "Sit down," he said quietly; and when she had done so, he added in the same quiet voice: "You did not speak to your father."

"But, Jean-Paul, I did."

The skin of his face looked as if it might crack as he smiled again and answered: "I do not believe you."

"I swear, Jean-Paul, that when I got in last night——"

"What does it matter? He did everything to humiliate and hurt me. He wanted to make me look a fool, and he succeeded." He laughed, and took a sip from the misty glass before him: "That is the English way. It did not surprise me."

"But, Jean-Paul . . ."

"Oh, let us talk of something else. What will you have to drink? A Coca-Cola?" He clapped his hands for the boy. "Don't worry—I shall get to England somehow. Yes, I shall get there in the end."

It was in silence that they now sipped their drinks; and Jean-Paul, who had trained himself to linger for an hour over each such glass, finished this one within five minutes. He got up to go, explaining that his mother expected him home to dinner: "I shall telephone," he said. But the call never came.

TWO weeks later the Mission on which Colonel Dangerfield had been serving was recalled to England, and finding himself put on the retired list, he bought a house and some acres of land in the West Country. After some argument, he allowed Rosamund to take a one-room flat of her own in a London block where one of his sisters already lived, and to start work as apprentice to an antique dealer in the Old Brompton Road. With a mixture of relief and nagging dissatisfaction Rosamund resumed the threads of her old life: the parties in Kensington and Regent's Park; the afternoons swimming at Roehampton; and the uneasy weekends in the country with her father.

A month after she had returned to England,

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she received a picture postcard from Cairo with the words "All the best" and a signature which at first she could not read. It was a measure of her disassociation from her whole life in Egypt that it was not she, but a friend, who eventually deciphered the scrawl as being "Jean-Paul." That same night, however, Rosamund had a dream of lying in the shadow of the fortifications—this time, alone—while, nearer and nearer, she could hear the football thud. Soon it would strike her, and when it did so, some terrible disaster would follow. But the next day that dream was soon forgotten, and Jean-Paul was forgotten with it.

Another postcard came many weeks later: "How are you? I think that soon I shall reach England. It will be wonderful to see you again," and to this one she sent back a few conventional words. Then a letter came; but it was no more than the communication of an acquaintance to an acquaintance, and Rosamund answered on the same detached note. But now as she moved through her crowded, agreeable life she seemed more and more to sink back into that old fantasy of hers of humiliation or pain or profound unhappiness; and she no longer knew whether it was with dread or with longing that she thought of these things.

One evening, when she had raced back from her work to change for a party, the telephone rang and she heard a voice say: "Is that Miss Dangerfield?"

"Yes." It was not Jean-Paul's voice; it was a voice brisker and far more matter-of-fact, it had the trace of a Cockney twang, and yet even at that moment she divined that it was connected with Jean-Paul.

"This is the Immigration Officer, Dover, speaking. I wonder if you can tell me—are you expecting a visitor from Egypt?"

"Well, yes . . . in a way. . . . Do you mean a Monsieur Nimr?"

"Yes, that's the gentleman. Is he going to stay with you?"

"Stay with me?" Rosamund was a fundamentally honest person; and when such people are taken off their guard, they always speak the truth. "Oh, no—that would be impossible. There'd never be any suggestion of that, I think."

"Oh, I see." There was a momentary silence at the other end, while Rosamund tried to picture to herself the man to whom she was talking. "Mr. Nimr insisted that he would be your guest while in England. . . . I'm going to be frank with you, Miss—Miss Dangerfield. The fact is that he's arrived here with only four pounds and nine dollars in his pocket, no return ticket, and no other visible means of support. Actually this is not the first lie in which we have caught him out—he had six hundred Egyptian cigarettes in his bag, none of which he declared. I'm going to admit to you that we regard him with some suspicion."

"But I can assure you, he's entirely honest—entirely respectable."

"Well, the position is this. We obviously can't let him into this country unless somebody is willing to guarantee his fare back to Egypt. Are you prepared to do that? It involves a sum of about thirty pounds."

For a moment Rosamund thought: her allowance was decent, even if not lavish, but she lived well and seldom saved more than a few pounds a month; obviously she could not ask her father to help her with a loan; but if she did not do so, she would entirely use up her balance at the bank. "The money will have to be deposited with us," the voice now added.

"Yes, very well. Yes, I'll do that."

"First, however, we shall have to check on some other details in the gentleman's story. Have you any idea why he should come to England?"

"I suppose he'd like to find some work over here. That's what I'd gathered from his letters."

"Some work?" A sharp upward inflection. "Yes, I see. Because his visa is made out for 'business purposes.' That, of course, we must check. . . . Well, anyway, thank you, Miss Dangerfield. We'll get in touch with you tomorrow morning about the deposit."

Rosamund did not go to the party; instead, she lay on the divan which at night became her bed, and smoked cigarette after cigarette as she stared out of the window at the lights of the Thames. There was already a touch of autumn

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in the air, and some dead leaves had blown in through the window and scraped along the parquet. Over and over, she repeated to herself the conversation with the Immigration Officer, and each time she found in it some new insinuation of his or some new clumsiness of her own. Jean-Paul had intended to come and live with her, and she had repudiated that suggestion; and in doing so she had repudiated, once and for all, that evening among the ruined fortifications which (she at last realised) had become the watershed from which her whole emotional life would henceforth always flow. Cigarette after cigarette burned away between her fingers while she thought now of the two half-naked boys scrabbling in the dust; now of the moon shining on the vast, empty quay; and now of no more than a gold chain resting on a strip of bare sun-burned flesh.

Next morning the Immigration Officer was again on the telephone. "I'm afraid we can't let that Mr. Nimr in—in spite of your kind offer to guarantee his return fare. Frankly we now regard him with the greatest suspicion. We checked up on that 'business visa' and as far as we can make out he has no business here whatever. He can't tell us what firms he has come to see. He can't even give us any reference except you. . . . It seems altogether pretty fishy to arrive with only four pounds and nine dollars in one's pocket, no return ticket, and a number of lies. We don't like the man, and we don't like his behaviour."

"And where is he now?"

"Oh, we've sent him back to France."

FOUR weeks later a letter arrived for Rosamund. There was no word of thanks for her offer to guarantee the thirty pounds, and no regret for having told a number of foolish falsehoods. There was not even an explanation of whether Jean-Paul had, in fact, intended to come and live with her, so that she could never really know the extent of what she had lost through a life-long habit of honesty. All that the letter contained were a number of reproaches; but it was hard to tell whether these were intended for her or the Immigration Officer or the English in general.

". . . You know how much I love England," the letter concluded. "You know I have always thought only of coming to visit her. And then to be treated as a smuggler and a spy! I no longer understand the English, and I no longer trust them. I do not wish to have anything more to do with them. I should have learned my lesson when I failed to get the scholarship, but I was foolish, and now I have to learn it again. Never have I been so hurt and humiliated in my life."

As she cried on her bed, grief brought a lucidity during which Rosamund wondered whether Jean-Paul would ever learn his lesson; and whether he had even for a moment guessed the extent to which the hurt and humiliation was not his, but her own.

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Alfred Cobban

Cruelty as a Political Problem

DURING a short pleasure trip along one of London's canals this last summer, the captain and guide drew attention to a family of mallard ducks—a mother and six or seven ducklings scuttling through the water in the prettiest way. There were nine or ten to begin with, he said, and she will be lucky if she rears two of them. He added, the boys kill them by stoning them. It seemed a pity, such harmless little things, and for some reason or other my mind veered on to Belsen and Buchenwald, which was perhaps rather inconsequent. Between killing a baby duckling for pleasure and the murder of six, eight, or ten million human beings, the difference is so great that it seems almost indecent to mention them in the same breath. Yet boys, or men and women, did both; and one has only to look at popular fiction or films to suspect that a lot of people, even if they would not easily bring themselves to do cruel things, enjoy reading about them or seeing them represented.

This liking for cruelty has come to be regarded as a perversion more or less by historical accident, because it is associated with the name of the Marquis de Sade. He enticed a young woman into his house, tied her up, and stuck pins into her. His was a very mild case and only really notable because he wrote a book to prove that this method of expressing a natural tendency was a good thing. Other books have subsequently been written to show that he was a great if misunderstood moralist. He was undoubtedly rather mad. But the regrettable marquis did not invent sadism, he merely provided it with a name. The Nazi régime in Germany was an exhibition of sadism on a colossal scale, but the scale, not the thing, was new. Cruelty, it must be confessed, is an ingredient in human nature and is to be found in all peoples and at all times.

This brings me straight away to a much disputed question. It is often said that the Germans, during the last twenty years, have committed, or acquiesced in, cruelties of such an extensive nature that no other nation could have, or has, been guilty of their equal. Yet if, as I have just suggested, cruelty is so common in human behaviour, why should they be regarded as any different from the rest of us? The evidence scarcely suggests that Germans have any monopoly of cruel proclivities. The Nazis had no difficulty in recruiting their torture gangs from the natives of conquered countries. In France the Darnand militia was more feared than the German secret police. The Balts are alleged to have been particularly useful in the extermination camps. The Rumanians outdid the Germans in atrocity when they invaded Russia. The Poles had been less efficient in their persecution of the Jews, but they had done their best in the past with old-fashioned methods. We know all about the German concentration camps and the Gestapo. We do not know the death rate in the forced transfers

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of population in the Soviet Empire. No conquering army has ever released the victims of the Russian secret police to bear witness against them. On the other side of the world, Japanese atrocities during the Second World War are well known: have the Chinese Nationalists and Communists committed none on a comparable scale? Or are atrocities only atrocities when they are committed by the enemy?

But why should this enquiry be confined to the present day? If we go back two or three centuries, the tortures and massacres which have astounded and shocked the world so much in recent years would have seemed at the time much more normal and presumably therefore less shocking. Nor need we go to Germany or Eastern Europe, Russia or Asia, for examples. The tortures and massacres in France during the Religious Wars, the treatment of Jesuit priests under Elizabeth I, the proceedings of the Spanish Inquisition, the burning of hosts of unfortunate old women—and sometimes young ones—as witches in most Western countries, the ordinary processes of judicial torture—such things, if the numbers involved at any one time were much fewer than the victims of the Nazis, went on much longer and were more a part of normal everyday life. More recently the French Revolution witnessed some tolerably bloody massacres and counter-massacres, quite apart from the harvest of the guillotine. If the Germans are a peculiarly cruel and sadistic people, what are we to say of Cromwell and his troops in Ireland? Were the Englishmen of those days a different breed from us with a different moral nature? It would be a nice question to what extent the use of forced labour in the Soviet Union has exceeded or fallen below in atrocity the English and French exploitation of the slave trade in the past. The only clear distinction I can discover is that the British state abandoned the slave trade a century and a half ago, the massacres in Ireland took place in the 17th century and the massacres of the Jews in the twentieth.

It is tempting to suggest that this change in behaviour must be the result of progress in civilisation. I hardly think that this view can be maintained in the ordinary sense of the word. For centuries Rome spelt civilisation, not by our ideas a very humane one. China, some three centuries ago, might well have been considered the greatest civilisation in the world, and the Chinese were famed, rightly or wrongly, as specialists in the art of torture. More recently the Germans reckoned themselves the most civilised of European nations. If it was ever seriously believed that progress in material civilisation necessarily meant a decline in cruelty, that illusion should have been shattered by now.

There may be a suspicion that my argument is leading up to some sort of apology for Nazi excesses. This is not my purpose, nor does it follow from what I have said. The significant fact that requires explanation is not that all nations have perpetrated cruelties on the grand scale at some time or other, but that some nations have on the whole stopped torturing and massacring people, apart from acts of war, whereas apparently others have not.

THE most profitable line of approach to this problem is to examine a few specific cases to see how and why we came to change our national pattern of behaviour in this respect. For example, why did we stop burning witches? To say that it was because we became more humane is mere tautology: to stop burning witches and doing a lot of other cruel things is to become more humane. The real answer may perhaps be found by asking why we burnt witches in the first place. They were burnt simply because they were, or were believed to be, witches, who by an unholy communion with the devil had acquired all sorts of dangerous powers. They could make little manikins of their enemies and, by mutilating these, inflict pains and ills on the persons they represented and ultimately achieve their death. From a distance, by their devilish arts, they could cast diseases on animals, burn down houses, cause children to be still-born, produce blindness or madness. They stole babies and murdered them in their magical practices. They desecrated all holy things and their covens were conspiracies for the overthrow of all religion and morality.

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Various painful methods were the only way of detecting a witch and burning the only safe way of disposing of her. I dare say some, especially the professional witch-hunters, rather enjoyed, as well as profited from, the proceedings; but this I assume to have been an uncovenanted benefit and not the prime object. Given the generally accepted facts, the customary methods of dealing with witches, however unpleasant, were logical and necessary. Only when the accepted facts were examined empirically in a scientific spirit and shown to be no facts at all, or misinterpretations of phenomena which had other and more reasonable explanations, did the whole institution of witch-burning break down.

To take another example, French law, like many other legal systems, assumed that the way to discover the truth about a crime, and above all to secure a confession, which was regarded as the only certain proof of guilt, was by torture. This belief in the importance of securing a confession obviously still survives in Russia and Eastern Europe. English law in general did not subject the accused person to torture, but it had an appalling list of capital offences, because it was held that only by savage punishments could crime be prevented. Humane men often lamented the sad fate of criminals, or suspected criminals, but alas they knew there was nothing that could be done about it. And nothing *was* done until the 18th century, when a great school of law reformers ceased lamenting and challenged the assumptions on which the criminal laws were based. Writers like Beccaria and Bentham simply said: your facts are wrong, this is not the best way of detecting and preventing crime. And when their views were put into practice in reformed legal systems they were proved to be correct.

It is not quite so easy to explain why people stopped burning one another for the sake of the true religion, but at least part of the explanation is to be found in a change of opinion about the facts involved in religious persecution. In the 16th century, and largely in the 17th also, it was practically a universal opinion that two religions could not exist side by side in the same state without tearing society to pieces. Given the experience of many states this was a reasonable opinion. It was held with such axiomatic conviction that it was never put to the test, until in France the *Politiques*, wearied of incessant bloody civil strife, concluded that even such a risky experiment might be worth making. In due course, after a certain number of false starts, it turned out that it was in fact possible for more than one religion to survive, comparatively peaceably, in the same state. In other words, the facts which were assumed in the theory of religious intolerance were at least in this respect wrong.

IN EACH of the examples I have given, a major step in the direction of increased humanity and a notable decrease in man's inhumanity to man was the result, in part, of a more correct appreciation of the relevant facts. But of course this new appreciation would not have been effective, nor indeed would it have been sought, if there were not an ethical tendency in human nature to condemn whatever is regarded as unnecessary cruelty. There is also the implication that, by and large, this ethical tendency is stronger than the sadistic disposition of which I have already spoken. This is a reasonable supposition, for if it were not so we should all of us be living all our time in a society no better than Hobbes' state of nature, and life would be permanently nasty, brutish and short.

The moral and humane tendencies, which normally predominate over the sadistic strain in human nature, provided the motive force for ethical advance in the 17th and 18th centuries; but it was only released when the empirical investigation of the facts assumed by systems of organised cruelty eliminated their appearance of rational justification. The consequent great reappraisal of social institutions brought down many Molochs of cruelty. It was largely the work of the empirical and utilitarian thinkers of Western Europe. They did not discover, as is sometimes implied, that men liked what they liked and disliked what they disliked, and that pain fell into the latter category; but they concentrated attention on the fact that pain is in itself a bad thing. The

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systematic theory they erected on this basis had its flaws and limitations; but at least it led men to consider whether all the pain which was inflicted in the normal processes of society was actually necessary in the interests of some higher end. It was soon found that it was not.

This was part of the movement known to historians as the Enlightenment. It effected a great change, not in human nature but in human behaviour. But it was not world-wide in its scope: even in Europe it only penetrated very fragmentarily beyond the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees. This fact may offer some explanation why things could happen under Hitler in Germany, under Mussolini in Italy, under Stalin in Russia, and under a lot of little Stalins in the satellite states, which could hardly have happened—certainly they did not happen—here.

I do not intend to rest, however, on a note of smug satisfaction at our own ethical superiority. Everywhere the ethical gains of the 17th and 18th centuries have been shown to be insecure. The problem presented by the institutionalised cruelties of the Nazi state is not to be dismissed as the simple if appalling aberration of a single nation. It was rather the most violent manifestation of a widespread ethical reversion.

The wave of cruelty seems now to be receding and these things go in waves. Humanity, it may be said, has only really lost territory it had never really gained. On the other hand this may be only a temporary alleviation; the horrors of the last forty years may be only a dress rehearsal for the real tragedy of the 20th century. What I have tried to suggest is the nature of the problem. It is essentially a practical problem, as all ethical issues are, and for this reason I am discussing it in practical and concrete terms. For the same reason—that if it is not discussed in terms of practical action I believe it is not worth discussing at all; indeed, I doubt if it *can* be discussed in any other terms—I propose next to ask what can be done about it.

THE problem I am discussing is that of political cruelty, in the form of the torture and killing of human beings. The question of war I am omitting, not because it is insignificant or irrelevant, but in order to simplify the issue. I start from the assumption that, in spite of the sadistic elements in human nature, a stronger disposition is to feel disapproval for acts of wanton cruelty. This disapproval is a form of ethical judgement. Many other kinds of behaviour are also open to such judgements, which are not, in the last resort, susceptible of proof. If I tell you it is wrong to drive your car all over the road, you may reasonably ask why. To the answer, because this will involve the risk of injuring or killing harmless passers-by and that this would be wrong, you could not reasonably ask why it would be wrong.

Ethical judgements cannot be proved or disproved, because they are data given by experience. It might be suggested that they differ from other facts of experience in one respect. Every sane person knows that if he puts his hand in the fire he will burn it: there is less general agreement, it seems, that murder and torture are wrong. This does not invalidate the ethical judgement. It is not universal agreement which makes a fact of experience correct, but the exactness and reliability of the observation.

The problem of differences in ethical judgement cannot be ignored, however. How was it that English and French, as well as most other nations, in the past, and millions of Germans more recently, could regard things as good which to us seem atrociously wicked? To attempt an answer by hypothesising great differences in human nature is fanciful as well as unnecessary. What we have to explain are not differences in human nature but differences in human behaviour. Obviously there are naturally cruel individuals and more or less insane sadists; but when a whole society appears to be thus perverted, some explanation in terms of rationality is required, since man is a reasoning animal. The use of exhibitions of cruelty for purposes of public entertainment is perhaps the most notable exception to this statement but these are usually of limited scope. Wanton cruelty, by which I mean cruelty purely for pleasure, though it exists, is normally restricted or repressed by society in the interests of the more important ends of

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social life, which could not be achieved if sadism were allowed unrestricted play. Social and political measures which involve cruelty of an atrocious nature and on a nation-wide scale have therefore to be provided with some rational justification if they are to win the acceptance which a direct and immediate ethical judgement would refuse.

I have suggested above that the decline of institutionalised cruelty in such Western countries as Great Britain and France may be attributed to the influence of the Enlightenment. The weakness of this movement in Germany and Eastern Europe is in part the reason why a different ethical standard has apparently persisted or been revived there, but a more positive reason can also be given. Wherever organised cruelties are part of the *mores* of a society, they are, in all the cases that I can think of, justified on the ground that they are necessary in the interests of some higher end. An apparently rational theory, or better still a religious or pseudo-religious doctrine, is needed for their justification.

In the past, religious and judicial systems were the chief patrons of organised cruelty. In our time this function has largely been taken over by political systems such as Nazism, Fascism, and Communism, and the various brands of nationalism and racialism. All these trace their ancestry in part back to German thinkers and especially to the philosophy of Hegel. German thought of the romantic period constituted one of the major obstacles to the spread of the ideas of the Enlightenment, as well as providing the intellectual climate for the development later of the Nazi racial theory. This was what stimulated and made possible the murder of millions. Though from the point of view of objective facts nothing could have been madder than Nazi racialism, yet—and this shows the power even of the wildest theory—it was swallowed whole by a large proportion of the German nation. It is salutary to remember that the same theory affected also a substantial minority in France and was not without influence in the English-speaking world.

Racialism and nationalism have declined from the high peak represented by Nazi Germany, though they still embody a great, perhaps the greatest, obstacle to the progress of ethical ideas in national and international life. Meanwhile another theory, also evolved in the 19th century, which has provided the justification for a great outburst of political cruelty, continues to flourish. This is Communism. It is, however, a curious hybrid bred out of Hegelianism and the Enlightenment, a mixture of scientific, rational, and humane ideas with a ruthless semi-religious, *a priori* ideology. Which element in its inheritance will ultimately tend to predominate remains to be seen.

THE main ethical problem of contemporary politics is presented by political creeds such as Nazism and Communism. By what means can political behaviour be raised at least above their level? I propose to examine the various possible answers to this question in turn. In the first place, of course, we can and have opposed their spread by force. But force is not enough against a theory. Those who begin by opposing a theory by mere force sometimes end by finding themselves copying its methods.

It is self-evident, secondly, that the untutored ethical judgement of the individual is not by itself a sufficient safeguard. It may be said, thirdly, that it does not have to stand by itself, that we are not faced with the problem of inventing a complete system of moral behaviour *de novo*. There are existing systems of social ethics which condemn the kinds of things which our natural moral judgement leads us to condemn in modern political life; and they are all the more valuable in that they have the strength of religious conviction behind them. This is true, and it would be foolish to disregard the sanction that a religion can add to social ethics.

On the other hand, ethical systems that depend on the acceptance of the commands of some unquestioned supra-human authority—apart from any objections based on philosophical grounds—can only function successfully so long as the authority does in fact remain unquestioned. Moreover, it has been shown that it is remarkably easy to replace one absolute

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authority by another. The habit of accepting ethical standards because they are laid down by authority is easily transferred. An examination of the recent history of, say, Italy, Germany and Russia, countries in which religious authority was particularly strong, must lead to some doubts whether the religious sanction is by itself an adequate barrier against the rise of ideologies which promote, justify, and institutionalise systems of terror and torture. A further difficulty is that traditional systems of ethics are apt to include features which were perhaps appropriate to earlier social situations, but which in a new situation have lost their ethical content and have sometimes even become repulsive to contemporary morality. For these reasons I cannot see that the appeal to religion is by itself the answer to our problem.

Fourthly, an alternative that is sometimes put forward is the appeal to science. The scientific and empirical spirit of the 17th and 18th centuries played an important part in the reduction of the element of cruelty in social life. One might have supposed that the further growth of the scientific outlook, and in particular its application in the field of social and political life, would have promoted a progressive decline in irrational cruelties. This has not proved so, and the reason is that science is a form of knowledge, not a stimulus to action. It can help us to adapt the means we employ to the ends we wish to achieve, it cannot choose those ends for us. This is why the great increase in scientific knowledge has proved no barrier to the growth of profoundly unethical systems of social thought. On the contrary the social sciences, as they have grown in stature, have endeavoured to assimilate the ethical indifference of the physical sciences.

This series of negative answers to our question seems to leave us with only one recourse. It is a strange commentary on our times that this, the most obvious, is perhaps the most rarely offered. The effective stimulus to an advance in social ethics, I suggest, must come, and can only come, from an expansion or release of the ethical judgement itself, such as took place in the Enlightenment of the 18th century. Fifth-century Greece witnessed a comparable wave of ethical thought, which continued in some respects up to the first century of the Christian era. In both these ages the process was set off by a great increase of interest in the problems of ethics. Correspondingly, the revival of political cruelty in recent times has been accompanied by a decline in the discussion of public and political behaviour in terms of ethics. Such ethical discussion as has survived has largely become a private discussion between philosophical specialists. The nature even of this discussion has changed, because in the course of the 19th century moral philosophy largely lost its concern with practice.

IN THE absence of rational discussion of the ends of society, ethical ideas have tended to turn into mere shibboleths, words like "peace" and "democracy" which can mean anything or nothing, but which because of their former ethical connotation can be employed as substitutes for the discussion of practical ethical issues. These terms, which formerly expressed ethical evaluations, have now become at best mere classificatory symbols like the old school tie: they can be used alike by those who are and by those who are not entitled to them. Their hollowness is the measure of the problem before us, which is that of the defence and restoration of the ethical foundations of society.

This problem is all the more difficult because if it ever could have been discussed in terms of a single separate nation such a limitation is no longer practicable. The actions of any state may now impinge on the interests and ethical consciousness of any other; peaceful co-existence between nations in contact with one another requires at least a minimum of agreement on what is and what is not moral behaviour in public life. Such a requirement may seem utopian, but it is really asking no more than a general recognition in the laws of societies of the basic ethical appraisals that are common to all mankind: for example, that good should not be requited with evil, that the expectation aroused by a promise should not be disappointed, that an individual should have peaceful possession of those things that are recognised by law as his, that the infliction of pain and death is in itself a bad thing.

These appraisals could be put in abstract

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terms and described by such words as justice, security, property, humanity. I am confining my attention to the last of these because it seems to me the most urgent issue of the present day. Differences over the laws of property sometimes receive a disproportionate attention, for the right of property is related to the expectations aroused by the laws and customs of each particular society and the difficulties that are aroused by variations in these are most often confined to internal relations in the society.

It may be argued that the fundamental need of our time is not the ethical demand of humanity but the political demand of liberty. I do not believe this. Self-government is a sophisticated demand of a politically conscious minority. I do not mean by this to imply that the discussion of the comparative merits of different forms of government is meaningless or unimportant, but it is a discussion about machinery. We have been able to concentrate our attention on this question only because the primary components of liberty were taken for granted—I mean such things as freedom from arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, torture, death.

One of the greatest achievements of the Enlightenment was the reform of the criminal laws and the reduction in the scope of political justice. Evidently, it was not accidental that the increased humanity of the legal systems of Europe went along with an increase in civil liberties, and that the recrudescence of cruelty accompanied the revival of more despotic government. I am not denying this connection, but merely pointing out that while humanitarianism may lead to democracy, democracy does not necessarily lead to humanitarianism. Moreover, the direct ethical judgement is passed not on the sophisticated issue of systems of government but on the simple one of the methods they employ. This fact is not unimportant in practice. The appeal to a political or religious ideology can often successfully meet a challenge based on a rival religious or political creed. Ethics, on the other hand, is a universal possession: the pessimistic world-outlook which has been so common of recent years is based on an exaggerated view of the evil in human nature. To achieve the widespread acceptance of policies of almost unmitigated wickedness a theory such as Nazism had to present itself to the ethical conscience in the guise of a kind of higher morality. The other great contemporary ideology, Communism, is in this respect in a weaker position. It suffers, as I suggested earlier, from an internal contradiction deriving from its origins, which reduces it to the defensive in the face of criticism based on principles which Communism has itself in part inherited from the Enlightenment. The purges, persecutions, labour camps, political trials and executions, in fact the whole apparatus of political justice, can be denied or hidden: it cannot easily be defended.

The appeal to the ethical conscience, however, represents only one side of the argument. As I have already said, the Enlightenment won its victories because it was also an appeal to the facts. Of these victories one of the greatest was to make the criminal laws both more humane and more reasonable. A trial is in some sense a scientific investigation: it is an attempt to discover the facts of the case, and this can only be done by applying scientifically-worked-out rules of evidence. The improvement, or even the discovery, of the techniques by which impartial justice can be done, and by which the necessary conformity with the laws of society can be enforced at the price of the minimum infliction of pain, was one of the great achievements of the 18th century. The reversion to barbarism in political trials and punishments has been one of the most marked features of the ethical reversion of the 20th century. The Vishinskys, like the Fouquier-Tinvilles, are the witch doctors of the criminal law. The whole apparatus of political justice of which they are the servants is designed to pervert the truth and to put into effect a monstrous disproportion between any actual offence and the punishment. The spies and traitors with whom they people their nations are often no more than the mildest political opponents, and their elimination can only be made to appear justified by the sacrifice of all rational principles of evidence. The object of Fascist, Nazi, and Communist justice is to establish the rule of a minority or of one man

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by terror. This is what Montesquieu saw in an earlier age of despotism. "Security," he wrote, "is never more endangered than in public and private accusations. It is therefore on the goodness of the criminal laws that the liberty of the citizen principally depends." The attack on these forms of political "justice" in the name of ethics and reason represents for our generation once again the point at which ethics and politics meet; for if the conscience of humanity stands between governments and the employment, under a judicial cloak, of cruel and irrational methods of enforcing their will, the staff of despotism is broken in its hand.

John Holloway

Gulls in a Port

THE harbour's dusky sun-flower feeds the town
Out of the sea. The sun,
Flung in flashes to ripple and run
Through blobs of heaving oil and brown
Driftwood and bottles over the dock,
Suddenly breaks out in gold and malachite
Where the snuggled trawlers rock
To the impotent caresses of a muffled tide.
Grimy gulls gulp herring: yet they're moon-eyed,
And, once they press aloft, they flick star-white.

There the port squats: a flower, a monstrous animal
Made out of smoke, steam, tang
Of drenched salt, flustered clang
At the dock gate, derrick's snarl,
Welder's blue star, hiss: and down the sides
Of bucketing ships, gulls by the score
(As greedy and as dignified as brides)
Squabble, parade, gorge; then fly,
And suddenly the harbour runs its ensign high
Over the smoke-stacks and the whole wind-ridden shore.

Caged in their streaming house of sun, they turn
Brusquely. The arc of blood is taut.
Yet the faultless aeronaut
Scavenged the skill that makes it spurn
The tide of air in strong surrender,
And ministers not to beauty but to power
And expertise and zest and splendour,
Bright as a jewel, fused out of black
Dust. That whole burning town is cardiac.
No seed, save in the furnace of the flower.

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Letter VII: Blind Tide Emblazoning

BLIND tide emblazoning
My death for ever on
The sheldrake dark, unperish
Me here this night. Unperish
Me burning in these words
Murmured and roared through
The listening brain of silence
To where she listening lies.

Are you awake listening?
Or are you sound? The tide
Slowly turns and slowly
The nets of night swing
Round to face the west.
We drift at the nets under
Continual cries wheeling.
What winging shapes of silence
Are for us? The herring
Have had their run for the night.
Our money is in the net
Or out. And now we'll haul
And run for home. Are you
Awake or sound and deep
In the bolster-buried ear
Adrift? Slip by sleep's gates.
Slip by sleep's gates and out
From your lost shire and over
The shore's long curlewing.
Move through the shallows out.
Never the like of bright
Steerers overhead
Started as now. Wended,
So many lie within
Your musing ear. Orion
Is brightly barbed. Again
The glint inlays the gunwale.
The wind is rising. I would
From the fires of this sea
Waylay the headlong dead.
Come nearer to hear. See,
There they arm themselves
With Love and wave the fray
Nearer us as they rise
Through every word. Through you
This branching sea burns
Me away. What blinded tons
Of water the world contains.

And yet now out of all
Its bellowing deeps and shoals
Let me be fond. Love,
Let me be fond a while.

Bear these words in mind
As they bear me soundly
Beyond my reach. Through you
They love. But they in time
Do murder in that name.

Yet quick forget. It's all
Only a tale. Slowly
The great dialogues darken
Upon me and all voices
Between us move towards
Their end in this. Silence
Shapes before I draw breath.
Stay still. Listen so still.
There! Did you hear? Some ear
Speaks me by stealth to death.
Call through that time where once
You fondly strayed and all
The flooer o' Galloway
Wad doon an dee. So soon
She fell under a thorn
And me. So it arose
A lapwing wandered us.
The song is shed and now
I'm minded of Calum, a man
Out of Kintyre or out
Of my tongue spoken and straight
The thirst chimes me back,
And words are a thirsty lot.
I have a hake in my throat.
You'll barely know his voice
Now for his millstoned life
Speaks through the branks of grief.
The unkind iron casts
His meaning out. The mute
Harp hangs with aconite.
Yet not mistake. Let him
Begin in time. Calum,
Come out from that black drouth.
We'll man the bottled barque
In Mooney's. Remember there
You first rendered the sash

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Of foam your father wore.
May she be musing there
Tonight. For her I have
The length and breadth of love
That it shall lusty keep
Her mind and body good.
Her bent is mine. Calum
My tongue is Opening Time
And my ear is in its prime.
Ahoy Mooney. Draw back
The ancient bacchus bolts.
Stand clear of the gates.
And clear we are. So now
Calum, what will you have?
I'll call the rounds. Remember,
When we fished out of Kinmore
They made their own at the farm.
We drank it dripping hot
Out of an antique worm.
Now, Calum, here's to the keel.
Lift up your drinking arm.
I've waited so long for this,
To meet you in the eye
And in the ear. And now
All time's within our reach.
Drink and these words unperish
Us under the golden drench.

Welcome my dear as heir
To yes again the long
Song of the thorough keel
Moving us through the pitch
Of night in a half gale.
Here at the gunwale farewell
Gives us away this homeward
Night keeled into the final
Breathless element.
Always surely your bent
Is mine. Always surely
My thoroughfare is you.
And that is you by both
The high helmet of light
And by the beast rearing
To sire in the dark kiln.
Watch as you go. Hold
The mizzen there as the sea's
Branches burn and emblazon
Our death under every eye
And burn us into the brain
Of silence in these words.
The lit cardinals swing
Round as we swither off
Our course in a following sea.
Yet the bow climbs back
Shearing the amorous foam
And flourishes in this word
The angel-handed sword.
My love, soon to be held
Still in the last word,
Under out of the spray
Is best. But first, see!
By whose ambition shined
Do the signs arm themselves
So bright tonight to stride
At large for Love? Now where
You once lay lie. We all
Must die and we must all
Lie down in the beast cause.

Language becomes us. The ram
At large moves through this huge
Utterance in which we lie
Homelessly face to face.
Farewell then as your skill's
Worth, you wandering keel.
Make your best wake. Drive
Headlong through the salt
Thicket and thoroughfare
That offers her for ever.

My love my love anywhere
Drifted away, listen.
From the dark rush under
Us comes our end. Endure
Each word as it breaks at last
To become our home here.
Who hears us now? Suddenly
In a stark flash the nerves
Of language broke. The sea
Cried out loud under the keel.
Listen. Now as I fall.

Listen. And silence even
Has turned away. Listen.

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F. N. Souza

Nirvana of a Maggot

SOME years ago I spent a few months in an almost deserted village in Goa which is my native country. I was living in an old half-dilapidated house. The village, quite a primitive one, was scantily populated. The tentacles of the monstrous civilisation spreading on the outskirts beyond were gradually strangling it. Most of its able-bodied inhabitants had left to seek their fortunes elsewhere, in the larger towns and countries, if there were any fortunes left to find. But the village somehow still survived, even without a post office. Every few days I rode my bicycle twelve to fourteen miles to the next village to post my letters and collect my mail.

The house was furnished with an infested bed and a broken chair. There was no table. I had to squat on a mat to write and paint and eat my food. The floor was overlaid with a thick paste of cow-dung spread manually in a pattern of semi-concentric circles. There were little toads in nearly every hole in the walls, and the corners seemed to be tied together by cobwebs. Two holy pictures hung close to each other: Christ and the Madonna with their hearts in their hands. Placed on corroded nails, a worm-eaten plank made a simple oratory. Some dead flowers, a candle-stick with its socket burnt off, and a small wooden image of St. Thomas with a hole in the head for fixing a halo which happened to be missing. . . . A crude, baroque arabesque painted on the faded, falling wall in red and green distemper. . . .

In a little almirah I found a book. I took it out and dusted it. It was full of silverfish, some of them nice fat ones which had devoured the leaves with a diligence which reminded me of some of my learned professors. The book was an out-dated edition of collected English essays by authors as ancient as itself. I wondered who the recluse reader previously occupying the house could have been. Perhaps he was one of those Englishmen who go about in the mid-day sun and have been to the far corners of the earth, even to cobwebbed corners. There was no one in the village who was literate except the vicar of the church, and he didn't know English. I read one of the essays in the remains of the book: "On Wild Flowers," by Richard Jefferies. I don't know how old man Jefferies stands in English Literature or whether he was

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a horticulturist or a mystic; but his essay induced me to examine with great delight the wild flowers in the vicinity, on knolls and in thickets.

OUR servant Salu had accompanied me on this bit of exploring an uncivilised Goan countryside. In those days I painted peasants and rural landscapes. I painted them with broad strokes, heavily outlining masses of brilliant colours. Peasants in different moods, eating and drinking, working in the fields, bathing in a river or a lagoon, climbing palm trees, distilling liquor, assembling in church, praying or in procession with priests and acolytes carrying the monstrance, relics and images; ailing and dying, mourning or merry-making in market places, and feasting at weddings.

I used to write a lot too. But whenever I write, I get a feeling of incompetence. Not so when I paint, for then I feel I am the master of the situation. Words, however, are very elusive little things to me and they fail me. Nevertheless, there's an urge to express myself with them. What I'd like to do first of all is merely to articulate freely and easily. I have never learnt grammar and I can't spell correctly. Yet I want to say something, to make just a sound, even a guttural sound or a grunt, an onomatopœic sound emitted with a clearance of my throat. What I'd want to do is to suspend my vocal cords on the nib of my pen, like a mouthful of food on the end of a fork; to throw my voice like a ventriloquist's, but over a page; to emit sounds with gummed backs like postage stamps which stick firmly on paper; to make the split point of my pen the sensitive needle of a seismograph, as I can easily do when I draw. But it is difficult for most Indians to articulate by word of mouth or pen. There is an innate paralysis in us; a kind of latent paralysed force. . . .

I'd want my language to ooze out of my mouth naturally, pure like a bubbling spring, a fountain spouting out, its source embedded deep within the crevices of pristine music, echoes of which we still hear at times in a poet's voice and in the voice of the turtle. Such a language may have no orthography, no solecisms. It is ecstasy, emotion, groans, sighs, everything a man feels and endures, and it comes from the heart. We call it *vachana-bala*, that is, the power to make a sound. It is only when we hear the palpitations of a man's heart vibrate on the membrane of his vocal cords that we consider him to have spoken well. He may not have uttered a word that is comprehensible or intelligible. He may have said something which doesn't mean anything—it does not matter, so long as he has delivered himself to the wind and the clouds and falling fruit—as long as he has united himself to the sight of flowers, the song of the bird, and rustle of rice, the smell of mangoes, the taste of good food and the feel of flesh, playing his counterpoint in the polyphonic orchestra of the cosmos with his phonetic instrument. Inside the cosmos, semantics is a word inaudible because the cosmos itself is meaningless or reveals no meaning.

I myself read, write and think in a language alien to me: English, a language not my mother tongue but spoken to me by my mother since my childhood. But the difficulty in expressing myself arose from the very start. For how can one articulate in Anglo-Saxon with a jewelled mandible that was fashioned by the ancient Konkan goldsmiths of Goa? It bewilders me to think that my inarticulation was due to England having possessed a lot of boats which had netted India into its vast Empire.

The Portuguese, too, on the other hand, had colonised Goa and had converted its inhabitants to Christianity, and this also again divided my tongue and minced my words. (St. Thomas the Apostle, according to legend, had landed on our shores and preached the Gospel five centuries before it was heard of in Portugal. In any case there were Christians in India called the Nestorians, much to the surprise of the Portuguese conquistadores, but whom they later stoked into the incendiary Inquisition.)

SALU cleaned up the house thoroughly and made it habitable enough for me. He had destroyed all its creeping inhabitants. The toads, white ants, silverfish, cockroaches, spiders, lizards, and snakes he swatted ruthlessly, brutally. He pierced them with a pointed stick

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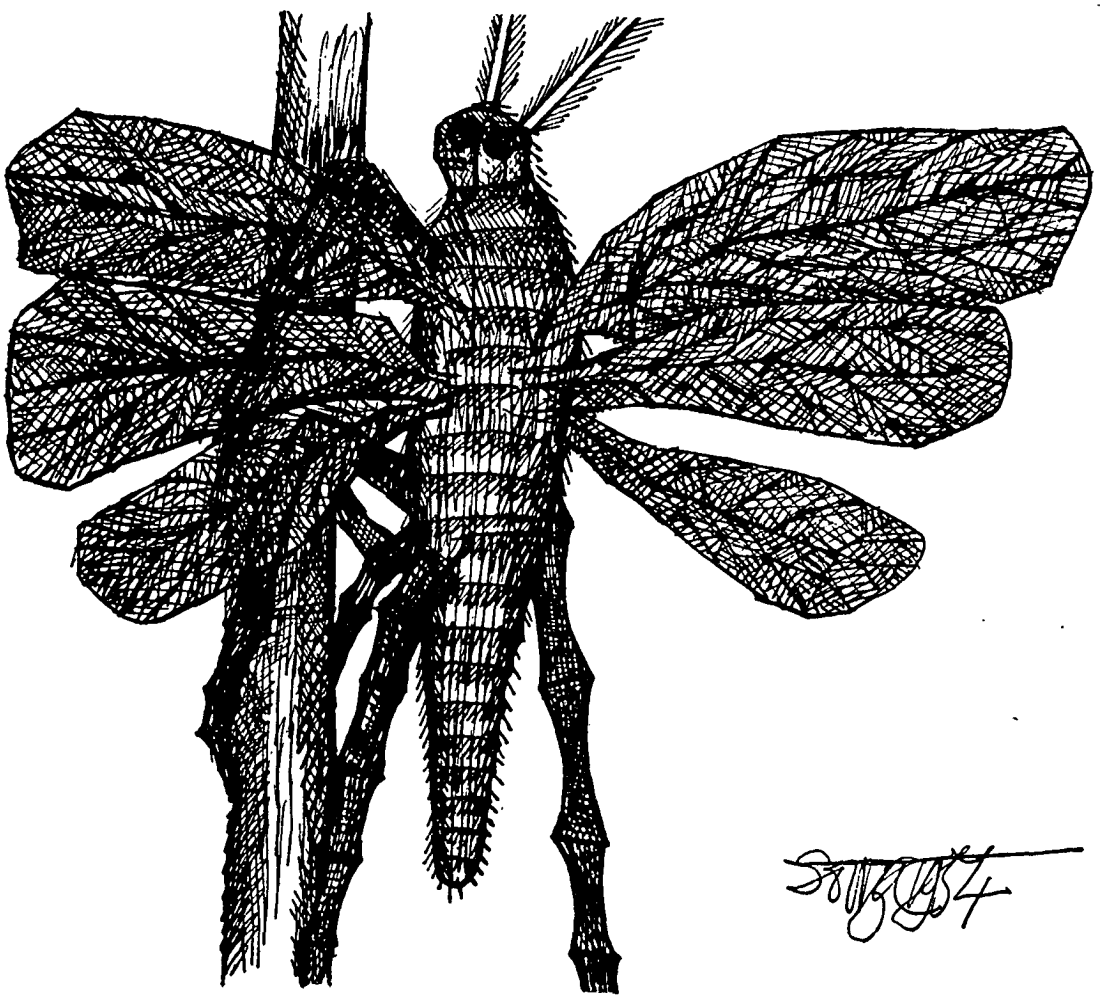
like a Hannibal, and burnt them alive like an Inquisitioner.

In the mornings I swam in a lake across the fields, quite near the house. The lake was luminous and flat, of an unbelievable blue, descended as it were from the blues. It looked like a piece of sky fallen on earth and embedded there in a miraculous moment of sublime tranquillity, when earth and sky yearned to unite, not lip to lip as they do at the horizon, but in a ventral unity, in a cosmic copulation. Sails of small fishing boats gleamed white, sharp as the wings of herons on the harp-shaped lake. Light on water, sound, movement, ripple, glitter; a rise, a splash of fish or green water-snake taking sudden fright and darting away towards the opposite shore. More sound, noise of leaves, of thunder, of rain on water . . . and in the cool of the blue distance beyond, rose a range of monstrous hills shouldering monstrously changing shapes in the sky, all the time being born anew and renewing again in the dark water of monsoon clouds. Kingfishers, mynas, parrots, bluebirds sat on submerged water-buffaloes, pecking at gnats on these enormous immobile torpid pachyderms who looked like black hulks of viking ships. The edge of the lake was ornamented with rushes, waterlilies, lotus, coral, barnacle; and its great deep auriferous glittering bed was a playground for God's incarnations or for Fisher Kings. I doused pleasantly in the cool fresh water for an hour or two every day and returned to the house very hungry. I swallowed a fiery alcohol and ate gluttonously a heavy meal of boiled rice, red-hot curry, fried fish, served all in a heap on a brass plate. Salu



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was a good cook, a primitive sort, but it was more the swim, the salubrious air, and the liquor that gave me a tremendous appetite. Then to bed for a siesta; or under the shade of a mango tree I dozed off in an easy-chair which I had borrowed from the vicar.

ONE hot afternoon I was lolling on my bed, half-drunk and naked to the waist. Through my window, I saw the vicar with the sacristan walk down the path, carrying Extreme Unction for someone in the village who was dying or had probably died. I could not tell exactly because the church bell had not begun to toll.

A drunken state is when humility escapes and remorse sets in. Remorse about everything. But it is really a state of humiliation more than anything else, and at such times, truth comes crawling like a maggot out of the dead or out of dung. If I didn't have such set-backs as I did have, I said to myself, I'd be so and so. Well, but I'm no less I said again. Everyone I want to emulate has come of good stock, not of bad straw like me. What was I originally? I was a blooming maggot on a dung heap. That's exactly from where I originated. That has been my breeding ground. My childhood has been insipid: like an undigested bit of straw. I have still the taste of dung in my mouth. Where I come from, they worship the cow. But nobody worships the maggot which I think might even be a venial sin against Baal-Zebub the Lord of Maggots. But now, if they whom I want to emulate were originally maggots, would they have been the ones I now want to emulate? I suppose not. But I, I was a humble little maggot. And now, look what a big proud brute I've made of myself. My mother, she's a strapping, handsome woman. She smells richly of the womb. I have the nose of a fœtus. My father died when I was born, like a beetle that dies having laid the egg. Then I caught the small-pox and my mother vowed to God that should I be spared, she'd send me to a seminary to become a priest. But I go about giving a damn to everything. Life was just one big orgasm, like my father's. Then finished. I know. I have the memory of a fœtus. I can never forgive him for having died just like that, and

having left me in the lurch. How could I get into the church after that? . . . It takes a lot of money to serve the Heavenly Father with vestments on, and an earthly father is needed to take care of it.

Then my mind began to wander into the city I was bred in: Bombay with its rattling trams, omnibuses, hacks, railways, its forest of telegraph poles and tangle of telephone wires, its flutter of newspapers, its haggling coolies, its numberless dirty restaurants run by Iranis, its blustering officials and stupid policemen, its millions of clerks working clock-like in fixed routines, its schools that turn boys into clerks in a mechanical, Macaulayan educational system, its bania hoarders, its ghatine women carrying a million tiffins to the clerks at their offices during lunch hour, its lepers and beggars, its panwallas and red betel-nut expectorations on the streets and walls, its stinking urinals and filthy gullies, its sickening venereal-diseased brothels, its corrupted municipality, its Hindu colony and Muslim colony and Parsee colony, its bug-ridden Goan residential clubs, its reeking, mutilating, and fatal hospitals, its machines, rackets, babbitts, pinions, cogs, pile-drivers, dwangs, farads, and din.

As a boy, I had to attend school like any

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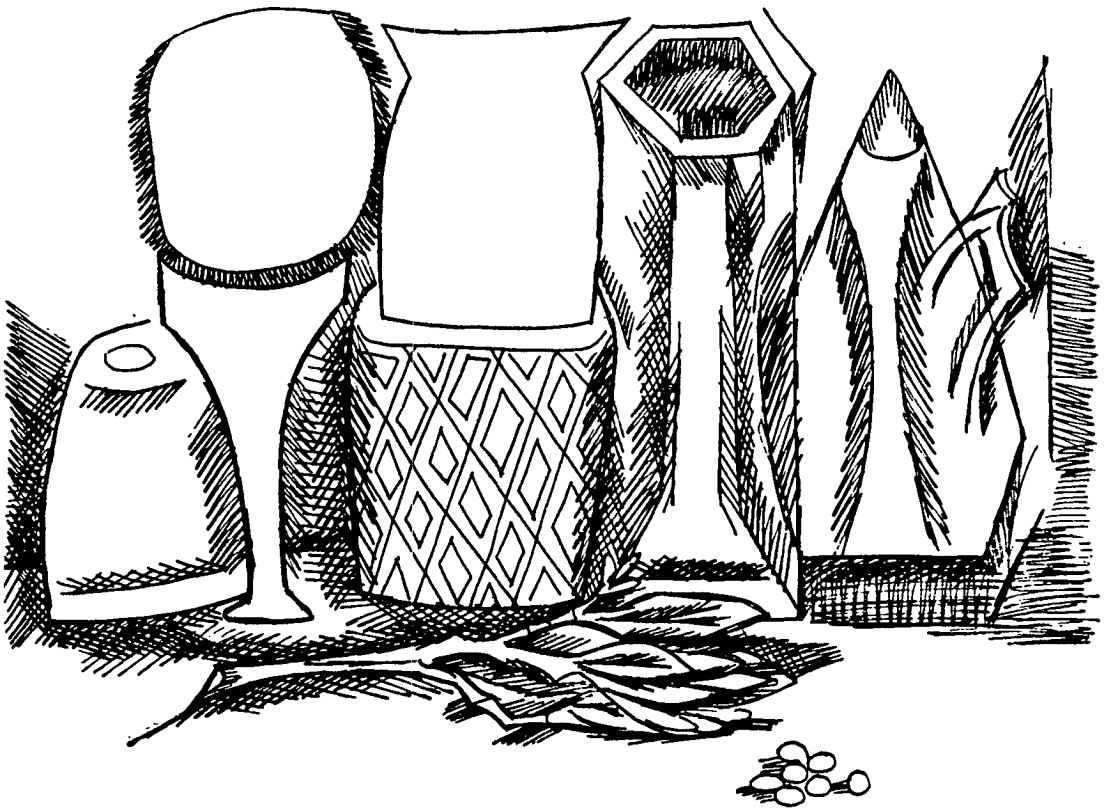
other, the difference being that schoolboys in Bombay were crammed by rote with a wretched system of education, the Macaulay system, intended as everybody knows to provide clerks and bureaucrats for maintaining what was a vast Imperial racket. I had tried to escape it for more than ten juvenile years of my life, often successfully by playing truant day after day, or by malingering.

I SPENT nearly four months happy as a barbarian in this little village. I patted the earth and thanked heaven that there was at least a small plot of land left on this planet which had not been poisoned by our ghastly civilisation, if it can still be called that, with its mechanised fangs which were simply and surely sucking the life out of us. Four months of peaceful celibacy but without any hermit's temptations. I had put on some flesh on my otherwise emaciated body. I was lying on the bed blissfully indolent, without cares and hopes.

Under the oppression of the whites, the black man had cried out in blues. But we, from the diamond-pointed Bharat with its pearl-like pendant; we of Aryan descent browned by the sun, if we were oppressed we took it with a stolid, austere resignation. If somebody squeaked, he was quickly smothered and gagged. The rest of us were all tongue-tied and dumbfounded, four hundred million of us. For three hundred years under a powerful foreign rule, and with two petty foreign powers on our coasts, we presented a vast spectacle of human endurance, drudgery, poverty, undernourishment, sickness, humiliation, imbecility, intolerance, fanaticism, caste and proselytism, tuberculosis, pus and open sores, primitive farming, erosion and famine, infant mortality, moribund living, mendicant families, dirt and squalor, lice, ticks, fleas, nakedness, and death. We lived lividly in a state known to us as "tamas" which could be described as the stupidity of the poor for sleepily clinging to poverty, and the stupidity of the rich who connived at whatever happened as long as their slumber was not disturbed. The yogis too went to sleep on a bed of nails. To rouse such an inert



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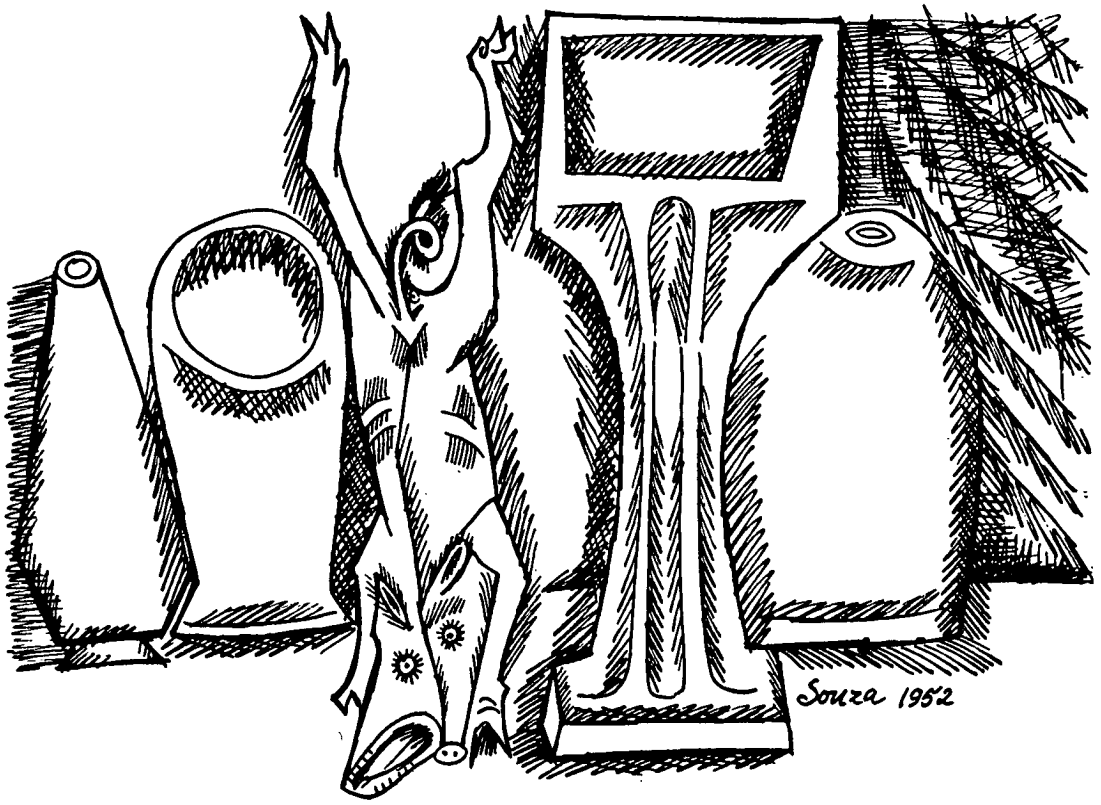
state one could do nothing but scream one's guts out, but as I said, we were all tongue-tied and dumbfounded.

Then, all of a sudden, there came a master-mind and dwelt amongst us and he made this horrifying inertia of ours work according to a definite plan of his own, if inertia could be made to work at all, except scientifically or miraculously. That man was Mahatma Gandhi. To the few zealots and Communists who were urging him to wake the nation to battle with the enemy, he gave a listless ear and admonished them to be silent. Resist not Evil, he told them, quietly quoting a dictum of Christ. The enemy, who was by the way Christian, was all the more baffled. It is a long history of tension between a great active force and a great passive force, the like of which never before occurred in the history of the world. The Western Christian world has never understood this truly oriental dictum of Christ's. It voluntarily resorts to terrifying might against whatever it considers is evil and at times even to mean spite. But Gandhiji did not budge. He was in no hurry to retaliate even with the peaceful weapon of his great idea. He had an astonishing certitude, and a precision of timing his move in a stagnant land where time is taken in terms of eternity and eternal rebirths from maggots to Nirvana. But by the time the ultimatum, or what is called the political crisis came, the Mahatma had already converted our national paralysis into an army of non-violence. We won the battle.

THE vicar of the village church was a man of great religious fervour, unlike those others one meets in Goa who take to priesthood and make it a mercenary end. The sacerdotal profession is a lucrative business there. The vicar and I became friends despite some of our ideas which were almost diametrically opposite; very much like those of a saint and a sinner, and yet, a sinner could really be a good friend of a saint and the saint must necessarily be a friend of the sinner. On Sunday evenings, the vicar invited me to dine with him in the sanctity of the little parochial cottage allotted him by the Holy See



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in Goa. A laundered table cloth was spread only when he had guests, a luxury he permitted himself with touching simplicity. (Occasionally he'd remove his biretta and wipe his sweating cropped head with a soiled handkerchief.) Compared to Salu, the vicar's cook was sophisticated. Stuffed cock, roast pigling, sausages, turtles' eggs, snails and *butch*, a heavily spiced dish of pig's intestines, comprised some of the Sunday dinners. Portuguese wines and a kind of cocktail which the vicar himself made, called confeçâo, flavoured with fruit kernels and sweetened with sugar, was one of his specialities.

Then he would discuss theology with me and I would roll æsthetics into it and my side of the argument would seem to him almost sacrilegious for I'd discuss the possibilities of the Creator on the basis of being a creator myself.

If you ask God to show you the cause of His whole Creation, this infinite universe, the entire cosmos, you will see that the cause itself is not as big as the Creation, in fact, it is something very small, for He will show you in the palm of His hand a tiny little thing which could perhaps be a drop of water, a speck of some sort, a nucleus maybe, or a germ of some kind: something which is impossible for us to grasp, both with hand or mind, but sometimes grasped at rare inspired moments by the heart. Therefore, we have called that little thing "Nothing" or "the Word," "Matter and Energy," "Om," "Breath" and what not. But all the same, it is that tiny thing which is the cause of the whole Creation.

In the same way, my own activity in matters of paint and words, I am trying to make one of creation within Creation. My drawings and paintings, for instance, are made of a little structure: two parallel lines cross-hatched on either side, e.g.

All my work—still-lifes, landscapes, portraits, and compositions are based on this principle, or perhaps it is a drop of water or a germ of some sort . . . because, if man is made in the image of God's likeness, his creative activity must also be in the likeness of a hypothetical activity of the Creative God.

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Maurice Cranston & J. W. N. Watkins

Of Human Freedom—A Discussion

WATKINS: In your book, *Freedom: a new analysis*,* you have shown that the old problem of free-will *vs* determinism is still very much alive, and that the attempts of linguistic philosophers to dissolve it by unmasking the verbal confusion which allegedly engendered it are *themselves* the product of verbal confusion. You have rehabilitated a real problem. It is also an important problem: the particular solution adopted will occupy a crucial position in any full-fledged philosophy of man and morality. Solutions have been proposed along three main lines. The first, put forward by Democritus, Hobbes, and Laplace, and elaborated in new fields by Darwin and Marx, was to assimilate man to nature and to regard human behaviour and thinking as causally determined. The second, put forward by Aristotle, survived until the 16th century but is now of only historical interest; it assimilated nature to man, and regarded the organisation of the cosmos and the behaviour of things in it as purposively determined. Both these views are unitary: they apply a single principle to both the human and the physical world. But the third main view, adopted by Plato, Descartes, and Kant, was dualistic: it divided the universe into a domain of causality, where things are determined by other things external to them, and a domain of rationality where things are self-determining. On this view, man is simultaneously a prisoner in the domain of causality (in so far as he is governed by bodily appetites and sensations) and a moral being (in so far as his reason is sovereign); man is not so much below the angels and above the apes, as an angel and an ape at the same time; and the conflict between the two sides of his divided nature is the conflict between good and evil.

Thus the determinist regards us as causal products of nature whereas the dualist believes that we are, to some extent, able to break out of the realm of natural causation and even feebly to imitate God's creation of the universe when our intellects, like unmoved movers, initiate processes in the social and physical world which would never have occurred if we had not believed certain things to be true.

It is obvious that these two conflicting doctrines will decisively influence their respective adherents' conceptions of the human situation—of the nature of personal responsibility and the status of morality, and of the applicability of science to human affairs and the possibility of scientific control over them. The fact that both doctrines are fairly bursting with moral and political implications should lend a certain seriousness to any discussion of them.

The question of the meaning of "free-will" only arises if determinism is shown to be untenable. So I will begin this discussion by considering your criticism of determinism. Now determinism asserts, among other things, that every future event is in principle predictable; and the main theme of your criticism is that *not* every event is in principle predictable. You support this denial by showing that there is one type of prediction which must *either* be

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falsified by events *or*, if it is confirmed by events, must have been illogically derived from the available information. These necessarily unsound predictions are predictions which influence the situation whose future they are forecasting. . . .

Cranston: It can happen in several ways. A person may treat a prediction as an "intimation of destiny" and, by acting as the prediction says he will act, make the prediction come true. This helps to explain the success of charlatans. Among the Indians of Guatemala, for example, witch-doctors often predict the death of a patient, and when they do so the patient is allowed neither food nor drink. Their predictions are always correct. Of course if such predictions were *not* believed and acted upon, they would often prove to be false.

On the other hand, publicity may also make what would otherwise have been a true prediction a false one. A college tutor, for example, may say to his best pupil, "You will get a first-class degree," and to his worst pupil, "You will get a fourth." The effect of his words may be to give his best pupil too much confidence, and thus to take a second; while the bad pupil may treat the prediction as a warning, stir himself to unprecedented efforts, and rise to a third. By announcing his predictions, the college tutor prevents their coming true.

Watkins: And Oedipus killed his father because it was prophesied that he would do so, and Truman won the Presidential election in 1948 largely because it was prophesied that he would not do so. But I think you try to derive too much from these examples of predictions which causally affect their subject. You claim to have discovered here a class of unpredictable events; consequently, while we cannot conclude that the doctrine of free-will is true, we do know (your argument runs) that its contrary, the doctrine of determinism, is false.

But I cannot see that this kind of unpredictability is at all relevant to the problem of free-will and determinism. Consider two "societies." The first consists of a number of mechanical predicting-machines as described by Professor Karl Popper in his important articles on "Indeterminism in Quantum Physics and Classical Mechanics" (*The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 1, 2, and 3). The machines interact, with the consequence that each prediction disturbs the system, and this disturbance falsifies the prediction. Thus no machine can predict the future of its "society." Now consider a society consisting of four expert bridge-players. If their bidding has been informative, it may well be that each player can predict the course of the game. Since the machines are driven by clockwork or electricity, the fact that the future of their "society" is unpredictable does not imply that their behaviour is undetermined, or that they enjoy free-will. Conversely, the fact that the outcome of the game of bridge is predictable does not imply that the players are coerced, or that they exercise no choice. On the contrary, it is predictable precisely because they are experts who play rationally.

Cranston: But is predictability so irrelevant? Consider the question historically. The free-will problem comes to philosophy from theology. Theistic determinists argue that because God is omniscient, He has foreknowledge of everything that happens in the universe, including men's choices and decisions; and therefore that men's choices and decisions cannot be other than what God knows they are going to be.

Scientific determinists say that every event in the universe, including men's choices and decisions, is in principle predictable. (Of course, no one asserts that all events are predictable in practice.) It looks as if this universal predictability of scientific determinism has precisely the same relevance to free-will and morality as the divine foreknowledge of theistic determinism. If it is true that all men's choices and decisions are predictable in principle, then all their choices and decisions are inevitable. If everything a man chooses and decides is inevitable, how can you blame him if something he has decided or chosen is evil? He could always reply: "I could not help it."

The kind of predictability I mention is relevant because its assertion is inimical to a belief

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in the freedom of the will and moral responsibility. Hence the refutation of universal predictability is a necessary condition for the existence of free-will. But to say that the refutation of universal predictability is a *necessary* condition for the existence of free-will is not to say that it is a *sufficient* condition for the existence of free-will. It is not to imply that everything which is unpredictable in principle (such as your Popperian society of predicting-machines) therefore enjoys free-will. Furthermore, to deny the claim of scientific determinism that *all* our thoughts and deeds are predictable in principle is not to deny that *some* are. Your bridge-players' decisions are predictable. So are a lot of other decisions people make. Perhaps most of them are. In disputing the claims of scientific determinism, I am simply denying that they *all* are.

Watkins: I agree, first, that just as the theological idea that God ordered the universe according to an intelligible plan grew into the philosophical idea that the universe is governed by fixed mathematical laws, so the idea that God is omniscient grew into the idea that, from a knowledge of all natural laws together with a knowledge of the state of the universe at any moment, the state of the universe at any other moment, past or future, could be deduced—for a scientific determinist like Laplace, God has become an unnecessary hypothesis. And I agree, secondly, that both theistic and scientific determinism imply that free choice is impossible. But I cannot agree that the kind of unpredictability you describe destroys either theistic or scientific determinism. If you had shown that a predictor must sometimes disturb his subject *before* he calculates his prediction, in acquiring the data for it, then you would have shown that complete foreknowledge is impossible. This situation does arise in quantum physics, though it is offset, there, by the possibility of making macroscopic predictions based on statistical probabilities. But you have not discussed the problem of indeterminism in physics; you have only shown that a prediction which—by being made public *after* it has been calculated—influences the system whose future it is forecasting, must be unsound. You have not shown why the same prediction may not be perfectly sound if it is kept secret and not acted upon by its author. Your argument implies that, as Popper has pointed out, an omniscient God would also be an impotent God because he would be bound by his own knowledge. But your argument does not prove that complete predictability is in principle impossible for an outside observer who does not allow his predictions to affect what they predict.

Cranston: I think you will find that my book does describe at least one case where prediction is impossible even by an outside observer who keeps his prediction secret and thus prevents its disclosure affecting what it predicts. That is the case of creative activity. Consider two examples. First, an invention, an invention which introduces a completely new principle, as the corkscrew did in the middle of the 17th century. Nobody knew the principle of the corkscrew before it was invented, and, what is more, nobody *could* know, because no one could know it without inventing the corkscrew. To predict an invention one must make the invention, which is only another way of saying that one cannot predict inventions. The second example is artistic creation. A poet does not know a line of verse before he has composed it. But if the predictor is to be able to predict what the poet is going to compose before the poet composes it, the predictor must know the line of verse before the poet knows it. If the predictor is the first to know the line of verse, then the predictor must be the true poet. And that again is only another way of saying that you cannot predict an artistic creation.

Of course, *some* of the work of an artist is predictable, indeed predictable in practice. Given certain sets of bars from Bach's *Art of Fugue*, a competent musical scholar could predict the next two bars or so. That is because the *Art of Fugue* is not wholly novel; in part it follows a conventional musical pattern. The unpredictability of an artistic creation has nothing to do with its æsthetic merit, nor has

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the unpredictability of an invention anything to do with its utility; the unpredictability of both is due to their novelty.

Watkins: When you say "one cannot predict inventions," you are using "cannot" in a weak, tautological sense. Your argument implies that if an inventor's idea, or a poet's poem, or a composer's fugue is predicted, then it will not be original since it will already have been discovered by the predictor. Your argument does not imply that the occurrence of the idea and the poem and the fugue in the mind of the inventor and the poet and the composer cannot be predicted by God or science.

But I think I can show that future discoveries, or at any rate path-breaking scientific discoveries, cannot be predicted in a stronger sense of "cannot" than yours, by showing that a rational method of predicting them is in principle impossible. Here, I am relying on those philosophers of science who have shown that a universal theory cannot be induced from a finite number of facts, however large: the theory has first to be *guessed*, and its consequences drawn out and tested afterwards. The implications flow from the theory to observable facts and not from the facts to the theory. Consequently, if you fed a factual description, however complete, of the universe into an electronic brain, however powerful, it could never yield an explanatory theory such as Newton's three laws. Nor could it yield those laws if you fed into it a description of pre-Newtonian mechanical theory, because, as Popper has shown, Newtonian theory reveals the theories of Galileo and Kepler to be only approximations, i.e. not quite true. And you cannot derive a higher level theory from lower level theories which are shown by it to be false.

I take it that secularised scientific determinism asserts that if science were completed and if a full description of the present state of the universe were available, then all (past and) future states of the universe would be (retrodictable and) predictable. But this is open to at least two grave objections. First, the solution of each scientific problem reveals still more unsolved problems: the possibility of a completed science recedes faster than science advances. (It was only during the infancy of modern science, during the 17th century, that the hope of perfecting and completing science was seriously entertained.) Secondly, science cannot predict its future discoveries.

We are both indeterminists in the sense that we hold that man is necessarily unable to determine what the future will be. But there is a further question: Is the future itself, and not only our knowledge of it, open and indeterminate? Most people instinctively believe that it is. But during the 17th century, sophisticated thinkers allowed this instinctive belief to be stifled, because classical mechanics appeared to show that the future is as fixed and unalterable as the past—future and past eclipses, for instance, can be predicted and retrodicted equally successfully. The 20th century thinker, however, is happily able to integrate his instinctive convictions with his sophisticated philosophical beliefs. He knows that unpredictable novelty occurs throughout the universe. The emergence of consciousness was as unpredictable as it is inexplicable. Quantum jumps are unpredictable; and so is that rare kind of molecular breakdown, the genetic mutation. Evolution can be explained in terms of genetic mutations, but *they* can only be regarded as arbitrary or God-given, just as path-breaking discoveries must be regarded as God-given milestones in the evolution of science.

Cranston: Neither of us has so far come to grips with the traditional defence of free-will. This maintains that for an action or choice to be culpable it must have been unpredictable, because if it was predictable it was inevitable, and if it was inevitable the agent cannot be blamed for it. In other words, on this theory only *spontaneous* choices or actions are culpable. Neither of us has argued that moral choices or actions are spontaneous.

You will notice that I use the word "spontaneous." Several modern critics of the traditional notion of a free will have said that, if a choice or action is unpredictable, it must be *accidental*. Ayer, for example, writes: "If it is not an accident that I choose to do one thing

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rather than another, then presumably there is some causal explanation for my choice" (*Philosophical Essays*, p. 275). This leads Ayer and others to say that the traditional notion of free-will is actually *inconsistent* with moral responsibility. For if all our moral choices and actions are accidental, none of them is culpable, since nobody regards a genuine accident as a proper occasion for blame.

This brisk refutation of the traditional view is, however, false. The disjunction between caused (or predictable) and accidental events is a false disjunction. Whenever an accident happens we ask what caused it, because we believe that all accidents have causes, however difficult they are to ascertain. An accident is undeliberated, not uncaused.

Why, you may ask, must a choice of action be spontaneous to be culpable or laudable? Most of the deeds that we praise and blame *are* predictable. Knowing a courageous man, I can predict that he would undertake a dangerous mission if he were asked to do so. I could predict that, were he told there was a child in a burning building near him, he would enter it to rescue the child. The fact that his deed was predictable would not make it any less laudable. Likewise, knowing a dishonest man, I could predict, for example, that he would not repay a pound if one was lent to him; but the fact that his behaviour was predictable would not make it any less culpable when it happened.

I think you would agree with me that predictability of *this* sort, namely the prediction of particular actions from knowledge of a man's character, is *not* incompatible with moral responsibility.

Watkins: I began this discussion by asking how relevant to the question of freedom and moral responsibility is the kind of unpredictability you describe in your book. Now you raise the same query about predictability in general, and I am sure you have given the right answer. When my bridge-players predicted the outcome of their game, they tacitly paid each other the compliment of assuming that the cards would be played rationally. But your predictions about the courageous and the dishonest man, and my bridge-players' predictions, have no affinity with the sort of predictions about human behaviour which the scientific determinist claims to be feasible. *Our* predictions presuppose that the agent will act rationally and in character; *his* idea of prediction dispenses with the notions of rationality and character, and relies instead on the notion of a ubiquitous causal chain. On his view, predicting the behaviour of people as yet unborn is quite as feasible (in principle, of course) as predicting my behaviour during the next five minutes. Thus his idea of prediction presupposes that our behaviour is determined by factors which are outside us in both space and time, whereas our predictions presuppose that a man's behaviour is determined by his present character and rationality.

Cranston: Of course, the scientific determinist *need* not claim that our thoughts and deeds are predictable from a knowledge of things quite external to us, or even that they are predictable very long before they happen. However, the emphasis of psychology is on the importance of the history of the infant, and if a psychologist could prove that our subsequent thoughts and deeds could be predicted on the basis of a full knowledge of the first two or three years of our lives we should feel disturbed. Disturbed, because we think that what happens in the life of an infant is not his responsibility; his parents and nurses are responsible; his decisions—if infants make decisions—are unavailing. Hence, if a man's biography is predictable from the events of his infancy, it cannot be the result of decisions which are, properly speaking, *his*. What he calls his decisions must be illusions, as Spinoza says they are: "Those . . . who believe they do anything from the free decision of the mind dream with their eyes open."

Watkins: I quite agree that an adult's decision is not responsible if it can be predicted without any knowledge of his adult personality but from a knowledge of his infancy; for here too his decision would be a consequence of factors external to his present self (though not quite so patently external as factors which operated before he was born).

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Cranston: Modern determinists regard our decisions as effects or as *epiphenomena*; and no doubt some decisions are. Already, psychologists have shown that much of the behaviour which attracts the notice of the police courts, for instance, is predictable; and as a result of these findings people have tended to blame criminals less and to look for some means of "reforming" or training them to behave differently. If psychologists could show that *all* the behaviour we censure or punish was likewise predictable, we should have to give up blaming altogether.

Watkins: I agree with you if you mean "predictable" in the causal, deterministic sense. Of course, people have often assumed that determinism allows them to blame their bad deeds on antecedent causes; but this assumption is erroneous. Imagine a philosophically-minded court of law in which the defendant asserts that his grandfather is really to blame for the crime because he transmitted vicious tendencies to him, the defendant. But classical determinism is neutral between past and future: either can be regarded as determining the other. So the prosecutor might very well retort that while he accepts the defendant's deterministic major premise he rejects the defendant's minor premise that the causal arrow points from the past towards the future; reversing the direction of the arrow, he charges the defendant with his grandfather's crimes as well as his own!

What that little excursion suggests is that ubiquitous determinism empties the idea of responsibility of its meaning. Suppose that Laplace's Daemon really existed, that he knew the position and momentum of every particle in the universe, and that he had deduced their subsequent movements over the next 1,000 years. Would we be dismayed by his knowledge? Michael Polanyi pointed out recently that the Daemon would not be able to tell a gardener whether his primroses will blossom next spring, but only the movements of particles in a space-time area, which is not what the gardener wants to know. Still, science does correlate theoretical postulates with sensible experiences (wave-lengths, for example, with colours); so we might equip our imaginary Daemon with comprehensive bridging-laws which would enable him to translate movements of particles into everyday experiences. Now his foreknowledge *would* alarm us. Before we were born he would have forecast what we say and do; and this, of course, implies that we are not responsible for what we say and do.

Cranston: But some positivists argue that moral responsibility is *not* incompatible with determinism. Patrick Nowell-Smith, in his article on "Free-Will and Moral Responsibility" (*Mind*, LVII, 225), points out that moral actions are a sub-class of good and bad acts. A moral action is one which can be *fittingly* praised or blamed. But *what* actions can be fittingly praised or blamed? Why, says Nowell-Smith, those which can be *brought about* or *prevented* by praise and blame. This suggests a rule for deciding which classes of actions are voluntary and which involuntary. Voluntary actions are simply those which *can* be influenced—encouraged or discouraged—by praise and blame. Most of the actions of ordinary healthy people can be encouraged or discouraged by praise and blame. The actions of the insane, or of compulsive neurotics, cannot be: therefore, these are involuntary actions. Kleptomaniacs, for example, are not influenced by punishment and reproaches; but, we are told, the ordinary thief is. Notice that Nowell-Smith is not only advising us to praise, blame, and punish where praise, blame, and punishment work; he is offering the effectiveness of praise, blame, and punishment as the *criterion* of voluntary (as opposed to involuntary) action. It is a criterion which can be employed within the framework of determinism; it is supposed to enable us to attribute moral responsibility without asserting the freedom of the will. It is a very ingenious argument, but I am not at all convinced by it.

Watkins: In your book you raised cogent objections to this argument and I hope you will repeat them here. I have two objections to it.

Positivists like Schlick and Nowell-Smith support this argument by pointing out that we do often make predictions about, for instance,

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how our friends will vote in a coming election without implying thereby that they will be constrained or coerced to act in the way predicted. Civil laws, the argument runs, do indeed *pre*scribe what is to be done: they do constrain and they can be disobeyed. But natural laws—which include the laws of psychology as well as of biology and physics—cannot be broken, not because they are more stringently enforced (they are not enforced at all) but because they merely *de*scribe what actually happens; and this is why predictions about human behaviour based on psychological laws do not imply that the predicted behaviour will be constrained and non-responsible.

My objection to this has already been levelled against Hobbes by Leibnitz. Hobbes, said Leibnitz, failed to distinguish between "the necessity which constrains the wise to do good" and "blind necessity"; or, to put it in our terms, between decisions which are the rational outcome of a man's character and information, and behaviour which is the causal outcome of external factors. The argument for the compatibility of determinism and moral responsibility is plausible only because, while it ignores this distinction and speaks generally of determined/predictable behaviour, it draws its examples from rationally and not causally determined behaviour.

My second objection is simple: Nowell-Smith's assertion that moral responsibility consists in being responsive to praise, blame, and punishment is a sheer distortion of language. We do not say that the more malleable a man is the more responsible he is.

Cranston: Nowell-Smith offers a criterion for distinguishing culpable actions from those which are not, but his criterion is not a practical one. It is of no use in those very borderline cases where we are not sure whether an action was voluntary, and thus culpable, or involuntary and non-culpable. In such cases we can only discover whether the action in question was voluntary (and thus culpable) by blaming or punishing the agent to see whether he responds; and we should not know whether to blame or punish him without blaming or punishing him.

Secondly, I agree with you that it is a gross distortion of language to say that being culpable means being responsive to blame. For example, I can truly say, "My dog will respond to blame or punishment for biting the postman"; but I cannot truly say, "My dog's biting the postman was culpable," for this implies that dogs are morally responsible creatures which, I think most people would agree, is sentimental and false.

Another example. Suppose you know someone who repeatedly borrows money and never repays it. You blame him, but it makes no difference to his behaviour. He is punished but he still goes on dishonouring his debts. On Nowell-Smith's positivistic theory, this means that his behaviour is not culpable. Again, I think very few people would agree to this proposition, certainly not the lenders.

Personally I am willing to believe that all criminals are serious neurotics, and that serious neurosis exculpates; and for this reason, I am willing to agree that the "hardened criminal" is not a morally responsible agent; but this is very different from saying (with Nowell-Smith) that hardened criminals are not morally responsible because they do not respond to punishment and blame.

Watkins: Another kind of person who is deprived of moral responsibility by Nowell-Smith's theory is the saint who goes his way impervious to the sanctions of society. In their different ways the hardened criminal and the kleptomaniac and your persistent borrower and the saint are equally unamenable to external pressure; and the bizarre character of Nowell-Smith's theory is revealed by the fact that it has to lump them together and assert that none of them is morally responsible.

Cranston: In fairness to determinists it must be admitted that they are often more compassionate in their treatment of criminals than believers in free-will. The penal code inspired in Italy by Cesare Lombroso, a consistent determinist, was far more humane than that which was inspired in the Papal States by Catholic philosophy, which asserts that the will is free. The greater humanity of our own juvenile courts, compared with those of the past, is largely due to the influence, among

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other determinists, of Freud. Unfortunately, many determinists are *not* consistent; Marxists and Calvinists are determinists, but revenge and retribution and "backward-looking" blame all figure prominently among their practices.

Watkins: Nowell-Smith's instrumental conception of praise and blame is interesting because it is symptomatic of that curious fusion of the idea of historical determin*ism* and the idea of human determin*ation* which occurs so often in the history of thought—in Calvin, Hobbes, and Comte, for instance, and above all in Marx. The determinist is frequently an enthusiastic technologist, regarding determinism as a pre-supposition, and technology as an application, of science. Now the moral technologist is not backward-looking but forward-looking; and you, with your distaste for retribution, approve of this. But notice his attitude to other people: he asks, "How can I manipulate these means to bring about my end?" (The Webbs were typical moral technologists.) Another attitude, however, is equally compatible with a forward-looking ethic and a distaste for retribution: one can regard other people as ends in themselves whose interests are as morally important as one's own; and one can ask, "What will be my most fair and impartial course in this conflict of interests in which I am involved?"

If you believe that such questions are sometimes answered in the light of genuinely moral considerations, and that the answers are sometimes acted on, then I think you have to admit that Plato was right in regarding the mind as a spontaneous source of movement, as the initiator of causal sequences, and that Hobbes was wrong in regarding the mind as nothing but a link in a ubiquitous causal chain, as something whose operations are determined by antecedent physical causes. Here, I think, is the crux of the determinism/free-will controversy. As you have said, the determinist regards decisions as epiphenomena, as the reflection in consciousness of hidden, causal, physical processes. But there is strong evidence against this interpretation of mental phenomena—for instance, a man in a hypnotic trance who is told he is holding a piece of red-hot charcoal will develop a blister on his hand although he is actually holding a piece of chocolate. Experiments like this seem to prove that mental events are sometimes the cause, and not the effect, of bodily events; that the mind can not only mirror but also initiate causal sequences.

Cranston: Hypnotism might also be called upon to fortify the case for determinism. I am thinking of post-hypnotic suggestion: cases of the kind where a hypnotist tells a patient that he will do something, not during a trance, but many hours after he has emerged from the trance. A hypnotist, for example, tells a man that at four o'clock the following afternoon he will remove his shoes. Four o'clock comes and the patient does so, possibly in circumstances which render his action decidedly eccentric. What is interesting in this case is not so much the deed itself, but what the patient says when you ask him why he did it. He does not speak of some strange compulsion. He offers *reasons* for his action. He says, perhaps, that he noticed that his shoes were too muddy or that he wished to look at the maker's name inside. He believes he acted from these reasons, but we, who are privy to the hypnotist's command, know that his deed was caused, and that his "reasons" are *post facto* rationalisations.

The trouble with this sort of thing is that it leads people to think it proves more than it does. It does not prove (what the determinist asserts) that *all* our reasons are rationalisations. It only proves that *some* are. And the indeterminist need not deny—I certainly do not deny—that some supposed "reasons" for actions are in fact rationalisations; the indeterminist denies only that they all are.

I am at one with you in believing that the mind is (sometimes) the spontaneous source of movement and the initiator of causal sequences.

Watkins: It is worth noticing that the causal sequence which culminated in the patient's "explanation" of the removal of his shoes *was* mentally initiated, not by the patient, of course, but by the hypnotist—by his scientific curiosity, perhaps. The problem is the doubt your example casts on the distinction between

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external, causal determinants and internal, rational determinants of behaviour, for in your example the alien cause infiltrated, like a fifth columnist, into the patient where it disguised itself as a rational intention. Thus it appears that alien causes may operate *within* a man as well as from without. We can no longer be satisfied with a simple contrast between being pushed over and jumping over a cliff: we now have to consider the possibility that the suicide is also, though in a complicated and metaphorical way, "pushed" over the cliff by something within him.

Cranston: Are you saying that a man's actions may be his and yet not his—that a man has two selves, one of which is his "real self"? Some such concept of the bifurcated man underlies totalitarian theories of freedom, according to which a man's true freedom consists in obeying his rational or "real" self, and slavery in yielding to the solicitations of his irrational self; and further, that when the State constrains men to obey their real selves, it "forces men to be free."

Watkins: We must not let the fact that the "two-selves" theory has been used to support a totalitarian conception of freedom blind us to the possibility that the theory contains some truth. Psychoanalysis appears to provide independent evidence that men are indeed bifurcated and that much of their conscious reasoning and self-justification is really mere rationalisation dictated by causes which are external to their conscious selves. But if we study the implications of psychoanalytic therapy carefully we find, I think, that the lesion between higher and lower, rational and causal, conscious and unconscious, is—or at any rate may be—healed. When a psychoanalyst asks, "Why did you forget that name?" he implies that the forgetfulness was not what it appears to be, a mere quirk or accident or temporary aberration, but deliberate and purposeful, although the purpose was hidden. The argument has now come full circle: hypnosis forced us to recognise that alien causes may operate within a man; now psychoanalysis forces us to recognise that these alien causes may themselves be reasonable intentions, but below the level of consciousness. True, they may conflict with conscious intentions; but this is because they are largely shaped by pseudo-information absorbed in infancy and childhood. And if that absorption of pseudo-information is remembered through being re-enacted, the patient (so the theory runs) will come to understand both why he formed a neurosis in what may be called rational self-defence, and also that this was in fact unnecessary and harmful because it was done in response to misinformation. Thus, whereas for Plato (who made some remarkable anticipations of Freud's ideas) the relation between the rational and the irrational is irreconcilably antagonistic and likened to that between a comely and athletic charioteer and the great black panting misshapen brute of a horse he is trying to curb, for Freud the conscious and the unconscious may be reconciled because *both* are purposeful and intelligent. I find nothing surprising in this recognition of the, as it were, intellectual capacity of the unconscious. In his famous paper on "Mathematical Discovery," Henri Poincaré gave instance after instance of sudden illumination after a period of intense but unrewarding conscious effort followed by a period of rest and distraction during which his unconscious appears to have been experimenting furiously with more mathematical combinations than a mathematician could formulate in a life-time, until it threw up the key combination which was both fertile and elegant in its deductive consequences.

Cranston: It is worth remembering what gives rise to the idea of the bifurcated man. The considerations, I suppose, are these: some of our behaviour is animal-like (if not machine-like) and some (to use an ambiguous word) rational. What is animal-like is predictable by the methods of science and what is rational is not predictable by the methods of science (though it is sometimes predictable in other ways). From these propositions—which I think are true—some philosophers go on to suggest, quite falsely, that since the same being cannot be both animal-like and "determined" and also rational and not "determined,"

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human beings must consist of two selves, the one animal-like and the other rational. But this notion only introduces further difficulties. Consider its consequences for Kant's ethical theory. According to Kant, all moral acts are rational acts proceeding from the higher self, and all immoral acts are irrational acts proceeding from the lower self. Since all immoral acts proceed from the lower self they are "determined." But if they are "determined" the agent cannot be blamed for doing them. Kant thus puts himself in a position where he can never logically *blame*; although he can praise, since moral acts, proceeding from the higher self, are freely willed. An embarrassing position for a philosopher of his persuasions.

Watkins: I think men are really more rational than they were said to be by rationalist philosophers like Plato, Descartes, and Kant, who concentrated all man's rationality into his intellect and denied it to his body and the lower areas of the mind, both of which they regarded as causally determined. But *this* bifurcation seems to me to be false. Biological processes—for instance, the process whereby genes deploy the cells of a living body into a large-scale duplicate of their own constitution —cannot be fully explained in causal terms; only when a biological process goes wrong is a purely causal explanation adequate. Death can be explained, but not life. Between the biological and the mental lies the unconscious, and this, as we have seen, has its "wishes" and "intentions." Instead of splitting a man into a rational half and a causal half we should regard him as a hierarchical organisation functioning intelligently and purposefully at various levels. Thus I am not tempted to adopt the Kantian position that irrational/immoral acts proceed from a lower, causally determined self. But it seems to me that *you* are committed to that position, for you stated earlier that you believed, or at any rate were ready to believe, that no serious criminal is responsible for his crimes which you regard as conclusive evidence of psychological illness. I disagree with this; I cannot see why psychological health and rationality must be incompatible with immoral conduct. The man who makes a fortune by skilful fraud does not seem less *rational* to me than the law-abiding citizen. Surely a man may have an unpleasant personality without being neurotic or psychotic? An apocryphal notice in a psychiatrist's waiting-room reads, "Are you sure you have a complex? Maybe you just are inferior." I regard a responsible action as one which is a logical outcome of a man's personality, but I can see no reason why the responsible act and the personality behind it should not both be undesirable.

Cranston: In some senses of "rational" the swindler you speak of might be more rational than the law-abiding businessman—he might be more systematic, more intellectual, a better conceptual thinker. But if "rational" is used in a sense which stands opposed to "neurotic," then I should say he is *less* rational. For I do indeed think that criminal behaviour is evidence of psychological illness and ought therefore to be treated rather than punished, although in the interests of public welfare I suppose that such treatment would have to be compulsory.

Crimes, however, are not the only deeds we blame. I meet few criminals, but I often hear people blamed for unpunctuality, for malicious remarks, for unchastity and snobbishness and parsimoniousness. The distinction between some of these things and crimes is a fine one (though it can be ascertained by referring to law-books) and I certainly do not say that bad behaviour is neurotic if it is illegal and not otherwise. What I do say is that the *more* atrocious the behaviour the more neurotic (or psychotic) the agent is likely to be. But I do not deny that psychologically healthy people can commit misdemeanours and are responsible for them and are justly blamed.

Watkins: I questioned your correlation of vice with psychological illness because it smacks of philosophical optimism, to which I am averse. Throughout the history of ethics there have been attempts to make moral problems evaporate by "proving" that genuine conflicts of interest do not exist (the one thing on which utilitarians and Hegelians agreed was that the individual's "enlightened self-interest" or "real will" was in harmony with the common interest or general will). The

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optimistic theory of ethics asserts that someone who (immorally) infringes someone else's genuine interest is also foolishly infringing his own (though how this can be asserted of, for example, rival applicants for a job, I do not see): immorality, it has been repeatedly claimed, would disappear if we stopped being foolish. On your view, immorality would disappear if we stopped being neurotic. I find this equally unconvincing. Let the natives and settlers in Kenya become as mentally hygienic as you like, conflicts and the moral problems they engender will remain.

But your view does not only overrate the morality of normal people; it also overrates the immorality of abnormal people. Joan of Arc was distinctly neurotic, whereas her judges appear to have been straightforward, shrewd politicians; and Pontius Pilate was the embodiment of the normal, decent chap.

Cranston: I would agree with you that a man might have a mildly unpleasant personality without being neurotic, but the more unpleasant his personality the more strongly should I suspect that he *was* neurotic. Aristotle, you will remember, thought that men with bad characters could not help doing bad deeds, but he somehow assumed that men *could* help having bad characters. Would you say that men are responsible for their personalities?

Watkins: Your question raises a crucial problem. I think you would agree that a person is responsible for an action if it is not causally determined by external factors but is a natural outcome of his personality. But if it transpires that his personality was wholly determined by genetic and environmental factors, such an action will also be an *indirect* outcome of external determinants, and therefore something he could not help doing and for which he was not responsible.

There is no comprehensive theory which explains personality-development as Darwin's theory of natural selection, for instance, explains evolution. I think the lack of such a theory is a reflection, not on the ability of investigators of personality-development, but of the fact that personalities develop in a largely indeterminate way. Unpredictably, an idea gets hold of us, we fall in love, an ambition springs up—and we become a new person. Whenever we decide to do something novel we take what may be rather pompously called a creative risk—risk, because we cannot know whether the decision was right until it is too late, and creative, because it brings new faculties into play. In this way, too, we become, bit by bit, new people. I think we are all largely self-made men; and to say that a man enjoys free-will is not to say that his acts are triggered off by a freely suspended, self-orientating will, but that he is in control of himself and his actions.

Cranston: I agree with you that we are all largely self-made men, and perhaps that brings us to the heart of the question of free-will and moral responsibility. Traditional defenders of free-will go wrong partly because they concentrate entirely on particular choices and actions. It used to be actions; now it is usually choices. Professor O'Connor, for example, says, "It is choices, not actions, that we praise or blame." I suggest it is neither. It is *men* whom we praise and blame. When we say an action is culpable we mean that it is an action which reveals a defect in the moral character of the agent. And it is this imperfection we are "getting at" when we blame the agent for his action or his choice.

Watkins: No doubt the exigencies of practical life sometimes require us to use blame as a corrective, but I cannot see any need for, or virtue in, blaming in the sense of merely passing judgement. That should be left to God. It is enough for us if we can assess character—especially sincerity and reliability—and if we can decide what we ought to do in conflict-situations. That, I believe, exhausts practical moral thinking.

Cranston: I dare say you are right, and just as I should like to see prisons and the birch replaced by clinics and the psychoanalyst's couch, so should I like to see people generally less eager to censure others. This is not only for what is also your reason, for dislike of Pharisaism as such; but also because I think that many of the bad actions which are at present regarded as culpable are not culpable. I do not believe,

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as you seem to think I do, that *all* wickedness is the product of neurosis. I do believe that *much* of the behaviour at present so readily condemned as wickedness is. A bad action is culpable only if it is a manifestation of a defect of character. If it is the product of some psychological affliction, then it is not culpable. Serious neurosis (or psychosis) exculpates. Assuredly, the milder forms of neurosis do not exculpate. A neurosis exculpates when it invades the whole personality; and I think such cases are more common than is realised.

To sum up. I agree with you that the crucial question of moral responsibility is not "Could a man have acted (or chosen) differently when he did a particular deed?" It is rather the question which arises from the recognition that bad deeds are culpable only if they reveal defects of character, namely, "Could a man have had a different character?" This is not strictly a question of *choice* at all. Characters are formed, not chosen. I believe (and again I agree with you) that we form our own characters. The alternative view is that our characters are wholly *imposed* on us. It is because determinism entails this alternative view that it is incompatible with moral responsibility.

We are both indeterminists. You are more willing than I am to commit yourself to opinions about the nature of the universe. And although we are both interested in psychoanalysis, we attach importance to different aspects of it. Does either of us believe in the freedom of the will? If this is a matter of unpredictable volitions, evidently not. On the other hand, we both maintain that men are morally responsible for their characters because they form their own characters. If this is "free-will," then we do believe in it. Neither of us seems to find "free-will" a very felicitous or appropriate expression; but it does serve to designate a genuine philosophical problem, and one which, we are also agreed, is something much more than a purely academic one.

Robert Conquest

Budapest in 1945

Looking through dusk and a very light mist
Over the luminous grey Danube and the lamps beginning,
From that hill of broken palaces the ruins
Assumed an ageless beauty, hiding the terribly
Slashed city, one of the very rawest

Zones in which Europe's hatred went
Absolutely to the bloody whirlpool's centre,
Struck a cold thunder over
Every usual noise and thought and carved
Granite to a formless monument.

Gold light shivered warmly from the water through the vague
Evening. For even there among all that
Débris of brick, flesh and steel, the eye selected
Blindly its focus. And so no verse can ever
Express the essence of the deadly plague.

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The Empiricism of Caravaggio

THE artistic standards of our time are, quite clearly, implicit rather than codified and come into being empirically rather than through the application of a theoretical principle. This at all events seems to be a more hopeful way of stating the case than any falling back on a defence in the guise of "catholicity," on a plea that in a chosen absence of æsthetic systems it can only be said that such and such is "good of its kind." That only begs the question. We still say, loosely, that a picture has this or that place between the extremes of good and bad; more precisely, that it is worth pursuing the enquiry into whether this is so and why. Only, the "why," as but rarely since the Middle Ages (for example in the *Journals* of Delacroix), is now debated on "internal evidence," on the success of the artist in finding a visual equivalent for feelings which enrich experience and refine sensibility—and here it is certain that the finding, the treatment, is paramount because otherwise the feelings could not exist.

Internal evidence is of course called in besides that offered by the picture in question: it is internal only in the sense of being within the art and operative in terms of art. Implicitly the standards embodied in Rembrandt affect our evaluation of Piero or Poussin or Cézanne. To take an example, the unqualified admiration for Rembrandt current today and the new recognition of Goya may be said to have altered our view of Cézanne over the past fifteen years; though this is only one way of putting it, for the cause and effect relationship is complex and reciprocal, depending also on the preoccupations of the present. The perennial need for consistency of judgement is therefore capable of being satisfied on grounds other than those of community of style, in the art historian's understanding of the word. Giotto, Bruegel, and Velasquez (to pick a few names in addition to those already mentioned from any pantheon we should today agree to construct) are not in any sense "comparable": yet we admire them all without doing violence to what is for us, though it has not been for the past and may not be for the future, logic and order. By each of these artists emotions and feelings have been given actuality in shape and form: the work of each is compounded of elements drawn from and reflecting back upon life, together with relations of the qualities proper to the medium—colour, texture, and so on—which function as visual effects, as "decoration" if the word be taken to mean something integral and not something added. But if what happens can be stated, however roughly, like this, its *value* in any given example can only be measured against the artists themselves. The argument is a circular one: it is in this sense that the standards of our time are implicit and empirically arrived at.

The excuse for this attempt to elaborate a commonplace is the need to deal as precisely as possible with the question, "How can we, valuing whom we do, at the same time accord our admiration to Mannerism, the Seicento, the Baroque?" What, now, does this question lead to? First, to a recognition that it can no longer, as it did thirty or a hundred years ago, receive an automatic negative. The shock of passing from the Renaissance to the Mannerist and Baroque rooms of an Italian picture gallery resolves itself on a rational consideration into an awareness simply of changed means of expression. But—and this is the second line of thought prompted by the question in hand—it

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puts one on one's guard. Honest willingness to abandon prejudice compels one equally to much sifting, qualifying, limiting. One resists an effort to revalue the later 16th and the 17th centuries in Italian art by measuring the success of artists in approximating to the standards, pressures and conventions of their own time. (That "standards" and "conventions" appear during this period as almost interchangeable terms for the same thing in itself points to what one is going to find, to the critical conclusion one has to draw.) In the end one is no better off through knowing how *close* the artists of the period came to interpreting an ideal conceived first in the mind, how *correctly* they preserved decorum and used the formulas for conveying emotion by facial expression and gesture, how ingenious Mannerist allegories were, how effective Seicento rhetoric. The estimation of degree in this matter does not help. In fact one sees, rather, that these standards—conventions—contain *of their nature* damaging implications: they tend to split, to diffuse the creative process, sanctioning the use of art as a channel for communicating ready-minted ideas to the mind and emotions of the spectator. (Of course, art *may* serve this purpose incidentally—the medieval "Bible for the illiterate"—but its value as art does not depend on its efficacy simply as a channel.) In the later 16th and 17th centuries in Italy, too much militates against the crystallisation in terms of art of feelings and patterns peculiar to art. So one seizes gratefully on what, as it were, breaks through—where the pressure conferring on the abstract idea the vividness of a truly artistic means of expression allows genius to spread its wings.

One is conscious of precisely and completely this vividness in Claude Lorraine and Poussin, in the architecture of Borromini, in the sculpture of Bernini (though with some reservations). For the rest, it is a matter of degree, a matter for local analysis. One assumes, for example, that the secular decorations in fresco, like Guercino's wonderful *Aurora*, will always be admired more than the altarpieces on canvas; first, because the rhetorical element, depending for its effect on a temperament peculiar to the age, is less important; secondly, because fresco maintained a higher technical standard than oil painting. It is also likely that the current popularity of Caravaggio, who is neither Mannerist, Baroque, nor classical, will enable one to consider the Italian 17th century from a new point of view: not because his influence was widespread—it was less so than has been supposed—but because his own work represents an enlargement of the possibilities of expression open to artists at that time. Coming to (say) Guido Reni with some acquaintance of Caravaggio, one is aware of a fineness of "edge," a capacity for surprising relations of tone and colour—relations at the opposite pole from cliché—that otherwise one might have missed in an acceptance of the traditional interpretation of Reni's work.

But the wider implications of the recent revaluation of Caravaggio are outside the scope of this essay, which is concerned with the revaluation itself. The first and obvious thing to notice is that Caravaggio is a 17th century artist although nearly half his career of not more than eighteen years actually belongs in the preceding century: his work was revolutionary; the whole significance of his achievement was anti-Mannerist despite the presence of residual Mannerist elements in his style. His early genre pieces are reminiscent in feeling of a minor current in Venetian art which we can trace back through the younger Bassano to Giorgione, except that the note is courtly and precious rather than pastoral—a quality which finds a more exact parallel in the madrigals of Monteverdi than in the visual art of Caravaggio's period. This also appears in his early religious works, most finely in the romantic *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. From 1597 onwards—that is to say, from the time of the *S. Matthew* series in S. Luigi dei Francesi—the paintings are predominantly altarpieces and the 17th century characteristics assert themselves positively. We find large areas of black shadow; flat, relatively inexpressive brushwork; and lastly, the 17th century's *literal* mode of feeling, its aim to reproduce directly in paint what in the mind's eye it conceived things of transcendental significance to "look like"—an approach which we may contrast with the Renaissance mode of thinking in symbols and painting *them* naturalistically. These are all characteristics of Caravaggio's art which he shares with the rest of his century. But in proportion as his art has in addition original characteristics peculiar to himself, the significance, the effect, of those he shares is altered from the norm. The dark shadows are not merely there to set the tone, to heighten

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the spectator's receptivity to the theme represented: the flat brushwork is not to keep the interest off the parts and put it on to the whole: the literalism is not designed to give substantial form to what is insubstantial. "What are the effects of these characteristics?" is, then, among the questions we have to consider. But "In what sense is Caravaggio a realist?" is a question that must be looked at first, and at some length.

We are accustomed to use the word "realist" for Caravaggio, Velasquez, Louis le Nain, Chardin, Goya, Courbet and, in our own time, for example, Rebeyrolle (one might add film directors like de Sica). These are the names that come to mind simply from current usage of the word and it will only add confusion not to keep to it: in the first place precision would be embarrassing in a term applied in the abstract to so loose an assemblage of artists; in the second, its connotations are sufficiently relevant, the qualities it indicates sufficiently applicable to the artists concerned, as to render it helpful. In the ordinary course of making a particular critical point one does one's best to give the word (like any other) precision by its context. But in the present instance a deliberate analysis is obviously called for.

What, then, are the characteristics which prompt us to use the word "realism"? First, the artist's choosing of his material from his own surroundings and his painting of it as a "thing seen": secondly, the representation of what we are inclined to call "life as it really is." Now, it is clear that these two characteristics, though interrelated in so far as each affects the form taken by the other, are different in kind: the first is a product of sense experience, of seeing; the second is a product of the mind and the heart, a matter of psychological attitude. Further, it is clear that the second is, among major artists and in any considerable degree, a rarer characteristic than the first, for the assumptions on which it rests are narrower than they would appear to be from their ostensible definition. "Life as it really is" means in the context of realism in art "Life as it is without the dignity which belongs to life." (It may not be an accident that realism is only found where humanism, even in a perverted form, is a living force.) The artist is involved in the exploration of implied contrasts, stating always the weaker side of the case, choosing to represent the pauper, the deficient spirit, the lost soul—each having its own standard beside which it is seen as a falling away. There is a nice irony in the stock 17th century comparison of Caravaggio with Demetrios who, it will be remembered, was Aristotle's example of the type of artist who painted people "worse than we are": in the light of what we *think* realism is, this seems absurd; but if we change the formula to "worse off than we are" it appears to be not so wide of the mark. At the simplest level this formula finds expression in the stressing of the merely squalid: as Mr. David Sylvester has said, "It is sometimes supposed that a painting of a workman or a dead bird must be more realistic than one of a nobleman or a live bird": in films it is more realistic to be unemployed than employed, to be a criminal than not to be a criminal (there is no doubt a tinge of this in our view of Caravaggio, who *was* a criminal). But for evidence that realism is capable of something very much more subtle, one need only point to the portraits of Velasquez and Goya. In both, the comment on the sitter's personality is a critical one: the gap between the personality as the artist sees it and the sitter's own valuation of that personality expressed in the setting, the costume, the indication of the *ambiente*, is most exactly and tellingly defined—and defined wholly in terms of art. Of no artist other than Velasquez or Goya can it be said with quite the same force that his work gets under your skin: the operation requires after all too precise and delicate a touch for a modern Expressionist.

Caravaggio's form of realism is, as one would expect, of a different kind from either that of the director of *Bicycle Thieves* or that of Goya or Velasquez—though it is nearer to the former—and one can detect differences of emphasis within his work as a whole. In Caravaggio the material, the side of the case stated, is, so to speak, the "fairly squalid": at all events ordinary, crude and simple figures hold the stage. The implied contrast is partly with the not so ordinary, the not so crude and the not so simple; but much more with the destiny, the choice, which Caravaggio's figures are called upon to face. To take one example: the great *Calling of S. Matthew* in S. Luigi dei Francesi. The material, the protagonists and the setting, is composed of a group from a common Roman tavern seated round a table in a courtyard. This is what the artist works with: this is what the

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picture is "about" at the moment when one of the figures is confronted by an overwhelming and inescapable destiny. The effect depends on keeping precisely the meanness of the courtyard and the colour of the tavern world: any other presentation, any change in emphasis, would have destroyed the dramatic significance of the gesture of Christ altogether.

ENOUGH has been said, it is hoped, to show that realism in art, as we habitually understand it, contains elements of a different order from those of seeing, and that it is conditioned by psychological attitudes. And it follows that these attitudes, while varying in the form of their expression, are sufficiently narrow in range to be the limiting factor; to be rarer, in short, than the "visual" characteristic of realism —the choice of one's material from one's own surroundings and the painting of it as a thing seen—which is in fact enormously wide in its possibilities of emphasis and application. Where the aim of the artist is to find as exact an equivalent as possible for a natural object, so that the effect of the painting or relevant part of the painting is to *recall* the object, it would seem best to call the principle at work "naturalism." This has the advantage of corresponding with our habit of calling the artists of the 15th century—supremely the Van Eycks—naturalists: their psychological attitudes (if that is the right phrase) are not at all those which we associate with realism. But there are other artists who fulfil the visual condition of realism whom one would spontaneously refuse to call either "naturalists" or "realists," though both naturalism and realism might enter in some degree into their work. One has only to name Rembrandt.

In analysing the relationship of Caravaggio's pictures to nature—how closely the work of art corresponds to what he saw in front of him—one has not only the pictures themselves but also his own reported remarks and the comments of his contemporaries, which may give a lead. He said himself that to follow the old masters was a contemptible practice and that the only valid method of painting was to paint directly from nature and to imitate nature as closely as possible. The critics of later generations took this up and labelled Caravaggio—and his followers—"naturalists." Now there are certain passages in his work which we should call naturalistic in the 15th century sense: there are such things as bowls of fruit and dress materials painted so that they resemble very exactly actual bowls of fruit and dress materials: passages of this kind occur for example in the *Calling of S. Matthew*. But they are more characteristic of the earlier than of the mature and later work: they become less frequent, in fact, precisely in the work which we are accustomed to call, on account of its psychological approach, the most realistic. *The Death of the Virgin*—and even the *Calling of S. Matthew*—do not at all resemble a printed mirror image (if one can imagine such a thing) of the scenes they represent. Obviously there is a difficulty: a question mark must go round Caravaggio's professed statement of his aims. The answer current among art historians (except Professor Longhi who has written the most brilliant, if elusive, criticism of Caravaggio in our time) is to assert that Caravaggio was bluffing. No doubt his honesty is compromised by his unpleasant character: probably he overstated and oversimplified his point of view—there were, after all, among the senior academicians (the late Mannerists) abuses to abuse; and possibly he only talked about those problems of his art that he felt were of more than private interest. These factors—and there are others—clearly contribute a large area of uncertainty to any attempt to relate the cause to the effect, the declared intention to the finished work of art. But giving one's attention to the work of art and comparing it with other works of art of the period, is to reveal an essential correspondence in the intention. The intention as a principle is exclusive rather than inclusive: it is, so to speak, at the opposite extreme from a Pre-Raphaelite raid on the universe undertaken with the apparent object of recording as *much* information as possible. To put it the other way and say that Caravaggio records a minimum of facts about the visible world is of course to invoke a meaningless standard of comparison, but one can affirm positively that he works by selection not by accumulation: one is aware of a fierce concentration accompanying a stubborn refusal to include anything that would conflict with the evidence of the senses.

Having only a few hints in the writings of early critics one cannot tell precisely what went on in Caravaggio's studio. Did he paint all the time with the model in front of him? Did he paint directly on the canvas and never make a preliminary sketch? Did he work by lantern

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light in the "gloom" which one sees in his pictures? To be able to answer these questions, stated as facts by most of the early critics, would be convenient but not in the end helpful because there would always be the transformation involved in the creative process to allow for.

CARAVAGGIO's professed contempt for the practice of following the old masters is a corollary of his approach to nature. He lived at a time when to "follow the old masters" and to "imitate nature" amounted very nearly to the same thing: each in principle reinforced the other. It is true that only lip service was paid to this among the late Mannerists: but during the years of Caravaggio's maturity, Annibale Carracci was engaged with formidable authority and conviction in reinstating it, in practice, if not in theory. (Mr. Denis Mahon has shown that it is incorrect to load any of the Carracci with a "theory.") His concept of nature was of course different from Caravaggio's: it was such that "Nature and Homer were, he found, the same." Caravaggio was the first to assert in effect that they were not the same at all, but essentially incompatible. However nature was to be "treated" in the process of creating a work of art out of it, to approximate it to the old masters would be to connive at a falsification.

The problem of treatment remained. For Caravaggio's recorded views on art are curiously unconstructive: they are concerned with modes of seeing rather than with art as an activity of the creative imagination. When analysing the relationship of the work of art to nature one is engaged in checking what is *not* there rather than what is; and one arrives, in so far as one can infer them from the work of art, at the "conditions" of its production rather than at its qualities. One has the impression of an artist whose whole approach was empirical and in terms of the actual figure, of the thing seen—even the mistakes in drawing may partly be due to a refusal to "correct" an awkward contour, as an academic artist would have done, though this cannot explain by any means all such mistakes. The working up of the composition—sometimes with, sometimes without a simple basic design—is manifestly a piece by piece process, a process of extreme difficulty if a number of figures in action are involved, as a 17th century writer remarked. Backgrounds are more or less "left out" in the sense that they do not represent anything: they do not create any sensation of atmosphere or space or of shadows cast by a lantern. They do not even create an imagined substitute for these things. That is why the 17th century writer who was the first to point out that Caravaggio's lighting is unnaturalistic compared with the normal daylight of his contemporaries, missed the point. At the level of representation the background is blank; it neither asserts nor denies: its positive effect is at a different level.

Empiricism is reflected not only in his attitude to nature and in his rejection in principle of the old masters—a rejection which went with occasional recourse to them for a motive, a pose or a gesture needed to fill a gap in his own invention—but also in his development: both what we know (due chiefly to Mr. Mahon) and what we do not know of the chronology of his work tend to show a discontinuity of development which must be almost unique among major artists. The compositions, for example, are extraordinarily varied in type: the degree to which the total effect resembles nature, though it varies less, is still sufficient to make a contrast between the relatively illusionistic *Calling of S. Matthew* and the ambiguous *Martyrdom of S. Matthew*—a picture which has the sharply focussed images and the corresponding blanks familiar in dreams, though it was painted for the same chapel and in the same years as the other. With Caravaggio's contemporaries, both Mannerist and "classical" (that is, Annibale Carracci and his circle), one always has the suspicion that they had a clear ideal to be aimed at, that they knew in advance, so to speak, what the picture ought to look like: with Caravaggio one feels the opposite; that every picture was a special problem to be solved *ad hoc*, an experiment the results of which could not be foreseen.

The experiment, the creation of the work of art in the conditions described, is what finally concerns us. This is less a matter of verbal analysis than of implicit visual comparison with other great works of art: it is only by the standards they represent that one can know what to look for and the most one can do by analysis is to rationalise one's findings. To put it this way is to show that the conditions, of which realism is one, though they determine the means of expression, are not the same as the means of expression. The finished work of

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art is not a qualification of realism—so that it is misleading to apply an adjective to it, like "romantic" or "magic"—but a treatment of realism. It is at this level that one picture by Caravaggio is better than another and his work as a whole better than that of his followers—unless one counts Velasquez as a follower.

THE problem of treatment was first a problem of composition; how to remain true to the original perception and at the same time to organise it. Professor Longhi has related Caravaggio's early use of the mirror to this, showing how the mirror could act not only as a frame round nature, but also as a surface which could be tilted to suggest a pictorially significant effect. When he began to use a dark background, he abandoned the mirror and organised the composition by means of the pattern of light and shadow: constantly, one must assume, the process of adjustment went on—adjustment of the effects actually produced by a lantern in a darkened studio to the requirements of the design.

Finally, though to suggest that it came last in a chronological sequence in the creative process is misleading, there was the problem (if that does not imply it was necessarily conscious) of combining the composition, the lighting and the statement of fact about the visible world, into something which was at the same time a realisation of feeling. This involved two things: first, the use of flat inexpressive brushwork to focus the attention on certain carefully selected details; secondly, not the falsification or the idealisation of nature, but the working out of the natural form so that it tended towards abstract pattern. Bearing in mind that his treatment is in terms of surfaces rather than of substances, one recognises, perhaps with some surprise, that Caravaggio's forms are in a sense less "realistic" than those of many Italian 17th century artists: that is to say, one has less the sensation of forms that one can touch; they have less "tactile value."

It is in the form abstracted from nature, in the light thrown across it with the black darkness isolating it, and in the chosen composition that the feeling is realised. One traces the emotion of desolation and loss in the *Death of the Virgin*, not only in the facial expressions and in the gestures; not only in the sensation of stillness and isolation produced by building up the composition figure by figure as if from nature; but in the half shadows on the faces, the light falling gently on the eyelids, the underside of the lips, the chin, the cheeks, the nose—on those parts of the face which are conventionally obscured—and along the folds of the sleeve, down the long, limp fingers. The light, with its corresponding shadow, has an effect analogous to that of music written in a minor key.

One becomes aware also that the effect depends on the tension maintained by the degree of concreteness in the form. In the great works—the works of the mature period in Rome up to 1606—the main Italian tradition of monumentality appears to act as a matrix for the revolutionary composition and the abstracted form to pull apart and press into entirely new shapes. Sometimes, as in the existing S. Luigi altarpiece and in parts of the *Entombment*, the matrix is, so to speak, too rigid. But where it is absent altogether, as in the late works, dissolution is the predominant effect. The late works look finer in reproduction than they do in the original: one's imagination supplies the immense scale (the *Raising of Lazarus*, which is the finest of them and partly a great work, is twelve feet high). In fact these works are defeated by their scale: the limitless void of darkness over the figures depends for its effect on a degree of abstraction, of sketchiness in the rendering of the forms which at the same time provides an insufficiently firm contrast. The forms are too much and too coarsely drawn on the background of darkness, instead of being isolated within it.

The masterpieces are the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, the *Calling* and the *Martyrdom of S. Matthew*, the *Conversion of S. Paul*, the *Madonna dei Palafrenieri*, the *Death of the Virgin*, the *David* in the Borghese Gallery, the *Madonna of the Rosary*, the *Seven Works of Mercy*. This seems to be the right emphasis. It is true that the feelings and emotions, considered when one views Caravaggio's work as a whole, are limited in range: they are predominantly of melancholy, of loss, of isolation, of pleading emotions which colour even physical terror. But they are realised wholly in terms of art, and realised in a way that is essentially dramatic, contained within the picture and scarcely at all directed outwards towards the spectator.

Michael Kitson

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Letter from Vienna

Between "No Longer" and "Not Yet"

Do you know what Austria is? Hesitate before you say you do, or the Austrians might ask you to explain it to them. The fact is, they don't really know themselves: at the outside, they might manage to agree about what Austria is not.

Austria, the country, is not identical with Austria, the myth. It is neither so happy and uncomplicated as the operettas would have you believe, nor so unhappy and complicated as Carol Reed depicted it in "The Third Man." Austria is not gay—at most it is "witty"; and the great Austrians of the last hundred years (even omitting Hitler) were great first and foremost in negation and destruction. Arnold Schönberg liquidated tonal music; Sigmund Freud dethroned academic psychology; Oskar Kokoschka was one of the coffin-bearers of representational painting; Adolf Loss, whom the world had not recognised at his true value, was one of the most important of those who overthrew 19th century architecture; Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, and Hermann Broch loosened and dissolved the old type of narrative prose; and all this is very Austrian and very different from *Lilac Time*.

Even politically, Austria emerged from negation. With the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy, there fell apart a state called Austria which had extended to the Riesengebirge, the Carpathians, the Karst, and the Adriatic. Hungarians, Czechoslovaks, Yugoslavs, Poles, Rumanians, and Italians made themselves independent, refusing to acknowledge the former centre; and this centre, with 6–7,000,000 inhabitants, was left behind—simply left over. It constituted itself a state, without tradition and without national consciousness, and was called Austria once more. Those in the Austria of today who are over the age of forty have lived under an Empire which was a true "millennium." The "adult" Austrian of today remains heir to Maria Theresa and Joseph II, and has the feeling of being a citizen of a world which, from Vienna, controlled Prague, Budapest, Agram, Cracow, and Trieste. The Austrian of 35 or under has the feeling of being nobody's heir and is at home upon a narrow strip of land between the Lake of Constance and the plains of Hungary.

What have these Austrians in common? Very little, incredibly little, much less than either of them imagines. They have in common a language, but it is also the language of Germany and of German-speaking Switzerland—and one can understand the dangerous temptation for 6–7,000,000 German-speaking people to orient themselves towards 50–80,000,000 other German-speaking people. It needed all Adolf Hitler's statesmanship to eradicate completely this tendency to unification, just as it needed all the charm and tact of the Russian conquerors in 1945 to destroy all sympathy for former fellow-countrymen and their new régimes in Prague, Budapest, and Belgrade. Since 1938, Austria has been cured of all her pan-German inclinations and since 1945 of all her illusions about the Danube Basin.

The victors in the First and Second world wars founded what is now called Austria. But it is a very curious state, which nobody wanted or planned in 1918, and which people have learnt to want very badly only since 1938, because from then on it had been destroyed and because Hitler was not wanted. It is a state which does not celebrate the date of its foundation as a national holiday; it is a state which does not know how old it is—a thousand years, thirty-six years, twenty-nine years (if we deduct the Hitler-intermezzo), or twenty-four years (if we also exclude the semi-fascist period from 1934 to 1938); it is a state which in the space of

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forty years has prescribed five different hymn-books and as many styles of school-book; and so it is not really a state at all yet, but will only start to become one when it is older than its oldest inhabitants—when no Austrian remains alive, that is, who was already alive in the year 1918.

WHICH day the future Austrians of a new century will keep as their national holiday cannot be foreseen. But clearly they will not have to celebrate any national heroes from the great age of the foundation of the state. With an inborn sense of the smallness of their country, and in the exercise of their inherited talents, they will be forced to turn to cultural values and, as always, will glorify as a "great past" what was never perceived as a great present—this present of ours in the middle of the 20th century.

That it was the Austrian Alfred Adler in Vienna who first described the feeling of inferiority, and based his theory on the psychology of the individual upon it, was not accidental. The feeling of inferiority is the *morbus austriacus*. I have already mentioned the Austrian propensity for negation and destruction; in this negation and destruction, the Austrian includes himself—himself and all he has. Other nations may be equally critical, even equally self-critical: but always their negation is directed only against abuses, not against systems, and certainly not against totality, against state and society as a whole. To the American, even if he is against the President, to the Russian, even if he is against the Party, to the English and the French, however much they may be "agin the Government," "America," "Russia," "England," and "France" remain thoroughly positive values; not so "Austria" and "Austrian" to the Austrian. The roots of this attitude lie deep in the national character and explain the greatness and the tragedy of a whole country and a whole breed of men. Johann Nestroy, the outstanding Austrian dramatist and satirist, said: "I believe the worst of everybody, even of myself; and I haven't often been wrong." And long before that, a Viennese popular singer, "lieber Augustin," had made himself immortal by announcing: "All is gone."

The course of history has cruelly confirmed this trait; no country in the last hundred years has lost its wars so radically, so totally, so thoroughly, and so finally as Austria, and Austrian reality at the present time is hardly calculated to overcome an individual and collective defeatism which has been licensed for centuries.

QUITE apart from the threat from world politics, Austria is also threatened internally, by Austria herself, in that no attempt is being made from within to create and establish a state which is bounded only on the outside, determined only by negation. There is hardly a country in which the cleavage between *pays légal* and *pays réel* is so glaring and so complete. Austria's present is an unstable equilibrium between "no longer" and "not yet."

On the one side are the old men, some of them even "grand old men," but irrevocably descended from the Imperial tradition, closer to the Congress of Vienna and the Empire than to their sons and grandsons. On the other side, the young men, the new generation. And in between—in between, nothing, or very little: no real generation, or rather a lost generation in the literal sense of the word. In Austria today, there are very few people aged 40–50. They didn't survive.

The few adult men there are, and the many old men, do not, cannot understand the young men; they think first of themselves, and then of their contemporaries and elders. In so far as they have any supra-personal basis for their activities as Austrians, it is the "glorious past." The adult and the old abuse the young and suppress them, misunderstand them, and leave them to themselves. And the young have a harder time of it than any previous generation ever had. Let us recall their life-history, at once the life-history of the Austrian Republic, and of the 20th century—which began, not with the turn of the century, but with the turn of history. Conceived in 1918 amid the chaos of a universal collapse (for the very existence of such a war at a time like that meant the crushing of a world which had hitherto been regarded as stable); suckled amid unimaginable distress, deficiency, and disintegration; growing up under the sign of a new "expediency," in the fleeting interlude between "post-war" and "pre-war"; a world economic crisis as their first *frisson* of adolescence; helpless subjection to politics as their schooling; active and passive participation in the war as their university; a life of transience, from the cradle to the present. It makes a fundamental difference

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whether one faces this life of constant inconstancy from a standpoint which, initially at least, is stable, or whether one is born into it. What is merely a nuisance to us of forty or more, is nemesis to the younger ones; they have never known anything else, and in Austria they haven't even the mainstay of belonging to a distinct and sustaining national unit. In addition, they faced during the war the agonising problem of whether they should hope for or fear the victory or defeat of their own side or their opponents.

And yet, these young people, the first real Austrians, if they are well advised, will celebrate themselves round about the year 2000 as national heroes. For Austria owes its existence, not to its ministers and mayors, not to its teachers and artists, not to its civil servants and diplomats between 1918 and 1950, but to its schoolboys and students, its tyroes and beginners, its apprentices and journeymen, its examinees and candidates, its outsiders between 1918 and 1950. The latter are quite unaware of this, but the time is coming when they should be told. Spiritually and artistically, Austria is living, not off interest on the past, as the adult and the old assert, but off a draft on the future, and no other genuine existence and self-expression is possible for a small state in its position.

IT SPEAKS not only for the immense power of Austrian youth but also, more generally, for the much-maligned mankind of a new century that this Austrian miracle is taking place before our eyes. In the midst of inconceivable poverty, in the menace and confusion of the apocalyptic post-war period, after years of destruction, blood, and terror, these young men and women came forward, shook the dust from their shabby clothing, rubbed the smoke from their eyes, and had not only preserved their essential humanity untouched but quickly attained knowledge and discrimination and maturity. Unaffectedly and quite naturally, they began to work, to learn, to exist—and the very act of existence in these circumstances and with this demeanour must be hailed as heroic. An epic has been lived by every single one of these young, these first Austrians: an Iliad and an Odyssey in personal union. This was the youth of Central Europe about whom even the optimists of the Western camp had been anxious: the "barbarous" youth drilled in Hitler's schools and organisations, who would, it was asserted, be educated and democratised "afterwards." They put us to shame. Even under Nazism they had enquired for banned books in the libraries and secretly idolised reproductions of "degenerate" art; in some inconceivable way, they knew all there was to know; they had passed like dream-walkers through the sombre years, and their dreams had been of new music and new art and new writing; their gods were Joyce and Kokoschka, Hindemith and Bartók. Into the vacuum left by the missing "adults," who had been decimated by war, politics, and emigration, sprang this new youth—and it really is new, it is very different. This youth is incorruptible and calm, sceptical and disillusioned; and it is not inclined to make concessions to Communism and its followers, despite the constant pressure to which they are subjected. It has radically overcome "the Hitler within itself"; it is not sorry for itself and not sentimental; above all, it wears on its sleeve neither its achievements nor its sacrifices.

The views I have expressed here about "youth" are based on experiences gained chiefly from acquaintance with writers, painters, composers, actors, producers, musicians, and students. Perhaps one cannot draw unqualified conclusions about the whole generation; but at least it must be said that as a body they are superior in every respect to the artists and intellectuals of every other living Austrian generation, and that this élite, even in isolation, represents that little company of the just for whose sakes we should be prepared, if necessary, to forgive the great multitude.

They dream of no empire, these young people, neither of the false nor of the true millennium. Their empire is of this world of the present century, but without Prague, Budapest, Croatia, and the Adriatic: a score of theatres, a score of publishers, half a score of universities, the libraries, radio stations, concert halls and art galleries of a small and impoverished country, compensating for its feelings of inferiority by falsely over-estimating the past, inhabited and ruled by a peasant and lower middle-class majority.

AND when the reader of this account has reached this point, he will want to know at long last what these child wonders are called and where he can find their books, their drawings, and their pictures. He will be astonished

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that he has not heard anything now about a European miracle which seems to be fairly sensational and ought to have attracted reporters of all kinds long ago. Well, Graham Greene's interest in Vienna was confined to the sanitary system, and most other reporters have followed in his and Harry Lime's footsteps. Nevertheless, there are ambassadors of this new generation: the pianists Friedrich Gulda, Paul Badura-Skoda, and Jörg Demus, inconceivably young and incredibly mature when you consider during what years and in what circumstances they shaped their personalities. One can also see actresses and actors who reveal what and who is behind them; and one of these, Oskar Werner, has occasionally attracted attention even outside the German-speaking sphere. I could go on to name you names, and tell a story to fit each name. But the names would mean nothing to you, and the stories would not be new ones for Austria. At the beginning of the First World War, Georg Trakl, the greatest poet of his country, died unknown and undiscovered; so, after the end of the First World War, did the painter Egon Schiele, just as young, just as gifted, just as unrecognised. Austria has never learnt to recognise its geniuses. The drawings remain in portfolios, the pictures lean against the walls of studios, the poems circulate in manuscript. Many of the young Austrian novelists have been published —but with West German imprints. Austria takes little or no notice of the fact that in them, and in them alone, there begins to live the Austria which, about the year 2000, will exist, will know itself, and will be known to the world.

Slowly, very slowly it becomes apparent that the 19th century is past. And only when the realisation of this is widespread shall we be able to observe what constitutes the 20th century. For no Western country (with the possible exception of Yugoslavia) has the change-over been so radical, so unconnected, so complete as for Austria. As Friedrich Torberg put it, the difference between the old monarchy and the present reality is the difference between Hellas and Greece. As a Greek one may grieve for Hellas, but one cannot revive it.

You had better not ask what is Austria. For the people you might ask don't know the answer, and at best will tell you they don't. Any other answer is wrong. Do not enquire about important and representative Austrians. The very fact that a man becomes known and is successful means that he is not representative —actors and musicians excepted. Anyone who lives well, or even adequately, in present-day Austria must be an object of suspicion. But a stern necessity takes care of change: in twenty years time we shall not be able to manage without the "new generation." In forty years they will have to manage without us. Then, the first Austrians will tell their children and grandchildren about us, and the children and grandchildren will be unable to believe what they hear. The names of those in authority today will be synonymous with narrow-mindedness, reaction, and insensitivity; and the hero will be the unknown civilian in the middle of this century.

Hans Weigel

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Communication

JOURNEY AMONG THE SAINTS

SIR—On reaching Tokyo, I found my December ENCOUNTER waiting for me, with the articles by Hallam Tennyson and Minoo Masani on "Land Through Love." They were of more than ordinary interest to me, since I had just made first-hand acquaintance with the Bhoodan movement, and it is an experience I am not likely soon to forget.

For various reasons, I wanted to meet and talk with Jayaprakash Narayan, the Socialist leader who, having left party politics, is now second-in-command of Bhoodan. In New Delhi, no one could tell me exactly where JP was, but everyone agreed that his *ashram* (i.e., retreat) was approximately an overnight trip from New Delhi and was located several miles from the station at that end. This "several miles" was extremely vague and somehow through frequent repetition it came to be fixed in my mind as "seven miles."

I left by 2nd-class coach for the provincial town of Gaya in the District of Gaya, Bihar State. The hazard of suffocation quite clearly exceeded the hazard of noise, soot, and smell, so my compartment mate and I agreed, through much gesturing and good-natured smiling, to keep the windows open. Conversation being in any event impossible because of the absence of a common language, we stripped down as far as was consistent with propriety and gave ourselves over to keeping our bodies as still and immobile as possible. Successive layers of sooty dust settled gently on us like a blanket of fine sticky abrasive.

Twenty-two hours later I finally arrived in Gaya, a hot and dusty provincial town. It was just outside this town that the Lord Buddha, some 2,500 years ago, attained Enlightenment under the banyan tree, and the site of Bodh Gaya is sacred to the few Buddhists still remaining in India since the triumph of Hinduism. My first introduction had a singularly ominous quality about it. I stepped out of the compartment into the magnificent disorder of an Indian station platform to meet the Bhoodan people who had come to escort me, and when I turned back, my sleeping roll had been stolen. Efforts to recover it being quite unavailing, I resigned myself with a Gandhian shrug, about which I was to learn a good deal in the next few days, and went into town.

As I have said, in Delhi I had formed the idea that JP's *ashram* was about 7 miles from Gaya. I quickly gathered from my hosts that it was indeed 7 miles—or possibly 8, or 9, or 10—but from a village 56 miles from Gaya. Whereas I had visualised a somewhat unpleasant jeep ride over bumpy country roads after an uncomfortable train journey, it turned out that the jumping-off place for the "7 miles" was a long bus ride away. How long? Well, say three hours. Persistent questioning on my part disclosed that it would take closer to ten hours for the 56-mile bus ride. Furthermore, the remaining distance—the "7 miles" which had been so firmly impressed on my mind—had to be walked over what is called a *cutcha* road, that is, an unpaved, unsurfaced road. (A good road is called a *pukka* road.) Now, this area had been the hardest hit by the recent disastrous floods, so that the road, normally negotiable by jeep, was completely impassable. There was also the possibility that the rivers were so flooded that we would not be able to cross them, and since there were three major rivers to ford, apart from innumerable streams and creeks which might be flooded now, the situation might not be too pleasant.

At this point I began to be a bit worried. Aside from a normal hesitation about a 7-mile hike over muddy roads one day and then 7 miles back the next day, I was worried about making my connections in Calcutta for Rangoon. My visa was valid only until the 21st (it was now the 19th), and the only way out on that day was by BOAC at noon. The Dehra Dun Express to Calcutta leaves Gaya at 9 p.m. and arrives in Calcutta at 6.30 a.m., and is therefore the only train that allows enough margin to catch the outgoing plane. All my hosts, however, joined to assure me that we would, without fail, make all the necessary connections. With some misgivings I decided to commit myself to the trip.

But I was adamant against going by bus. The seats were plain wooden boards, and the general appearance of the bus gave every prospect of terrible tortures ahead.

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As it turned out, the local Bhoodan headquarters had an old jeep. The driver, however, was away, they said sadly. Whereupon I enthusiastically offered to drive, assuring them that I had a proper driver's licence (which I do, except that it is valid only in the State of California, not in the State of Bihar). So I and my guide D, 35 years of age, a Gandhian who had committed himself at an early age to a life of service, poverty, and celibacy, finally set off for JP by jeep.

Within five minutes, I discovered that the steering was so wobbly that one could not always be sure of avoiding obstacles, however desperately one might tug on the wheel; the brakes didn't work; the tyres had no tread on them; the windshield wiper fell off while we were driving; the starter didn't work; the crank was so worn that it could not be engaged to start the motor (the jeep had to be pushed to start). And finally, the gears locked in second and would not come unstuck.

The prospect of driving 56 miles in second gear was sufficiently unnerving for me to insist that we have something done. My Gandhian companion agreed, but for a different reason. What worried him was not the hard work and annoyance of driving in second, but rather the cost, for fuel is very expensive. Later in the trip, when we had to wait at a railroad crossing for a train to pass, he showed the same bias. My reaction was to keep the motor running in order to save my companions the trouble of pushing the jeep; his reaction was to save fuel by cutting the motor. Only Americans are rich enough to be humanitarians, he laughed. In any event, we turned back to the All-India Headquarters of the Bhoodan movement and called for a mechanic.

The All-India Bhoodan Headquarters were housed in a vast, decaying baronial establishment, which was itself a land gift. One of the big landlords of the district, reached by the appeal of Bhoodan, had turned over his 6,000 acres as well as his villas and farm buildings to the movement. As we waited in the savage heat for the mechanic to work his magic on the jeep, I met some of the dedicated people—mostly Gandhians, plus a few enthusiastic socialist youth—who had given themselves to the Bhoodan movement. The Gandhians, especially the young men who had dedicated their lives to poverty and celibacy, interested me especially. Why was celibacy necessary, and how were these young men, in the flush and fullness of life, able to resign themselves to it? For these Gandhians it was self-evident that one prepares oneself for service to the people by first purging oneself of all selfish desires, that is by renunciation, and that celibacy is a routine form of renunciation. But for me it remained a tantalizing puzzle which I could not decipher in their firm, handsome, ascetic faces.

"You feel better, free of all these desires and needs," explained an elderly Gandhian to me. "For the first time, you become truly free."

A, a famous civil engineer, who some ten years ago, together with his wife and daughter, had renounced the world, given away all his great accumulated wealth, and dedicated himself to Gandhian service to the people, went on: "I am richer now than when I had all that money. In those days, I always had to worry. I had to look after and protect my possessions. I had appetites to satisfy. But now, I am completely free. I can go anywhere with nothing in my hands and with nothing on my back. I can sleep anywhere, because I do not need a house or a room or a bed. I can eat whatever there is to eat or whatever people are willing to share with me. I can entrust myself completely to God and man in this India of ours. You may ask, what is it that makes a man give up all his possessions and dedicate himself to service. I cannot explain it, although it is very clear to me. It is just something you have to do. Why do all these people try to climb Mt. Everest? Is there really any rational explanation for it? There is in them a tension that won't let them rest until they make the effort. Then, fail or succeed, they feel at ease again. Who can explain these things? All I can say is that now I am happy and I can serve mankind."

When the jeep was declared ready, D and I climbed back to get started. But our discussions had become so enthusiastic that A and two other Gandhian ascetics decided to come along. So all five of us started off gaily, arguing, discussing, and laughing about the ominous sounds the motor was making.

After about two hours, we stopped in a small town for rest and refreshment. As we slowed the jeep, we were immediately surrounded by great crowds of young and old, a-buzz with curiosity. We made our way through the crowd into a little open shop where tea was prepared for us over a charcoal brazier. A, the oldest of us, sat with me behind a small rickety table facing the excited, buzzing crowd. My other companions disposed themselves in various attitudes around the shop.

When the tea came, hot and strong, only A and I took some; the others drank water.

"Aren't you drinking any tea?" I asked, wondering if perhaps they weren't being overpolite.

"True Gandhians," exclaimed A, "don't indulge in any way, even in the drinking of tea."

"But *you* do," I pointed out to him.

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"Ah," said A, "I am not as thorough-going an ascetic as these young men are. I came to the movement rather late in life and it is a little hard for me to give up these little luxuries. Furthermore, there is no rule which says you *must* not drink tea; it is a matter of conscience. And I don't happen to agree with them on that matter."

"But what's wrong with tea?" I asked. "You're not going to argue that anything people enjoy is of necessity wicked."

"Well," he said, "they will tell you that Gandhi was against the drinking of tea because the tea plantation workers were the most exploited workers in the British Empire."

"But they are not now," I argued. "And even if they were badly exploited, there are after all many other workers who are exploited too—rice farmers, for example—and yet you wouldn't say that their products should not be eaten. Besides," I pressed, "if you don't buy their tea, the tea-plantation workers will be even worse off than ever."

"That's true," he said, after a pause.

"Well then?" I insisted.

"Well," he said, "some people say that tea is bad for the health."

"But what if it could be demonstrated that tea is *not* bad for the health?"

"Well, some people say one thing and some say another. Science is so uncertain," A replied. "You have to decide in your own conscience. Besides, it's an indulgence, and we are vowed to renunciation."

So after our tea and their water, we went on, finally arriving at a place called Chandradeep, where we had to leave the jeep and strike off on foot.

By this time the rain was so heavy that it was hard to see even a few feet ahead. You must recall that through a good part of these adventures, I had been dressed quite reasonably for a city—sack suit, shirt, underclothes, shoes, and socks. I even had a raincoat handy for emergencies. But as time went on, what with the rain and the unbearably suffocating heat between the rain flurries, my clothes became less and less useful, so by the time we arrived at Chandradeep I had already removed jacket and trousers. I was already regarding with envious eye the brief costume of my Gandhian friends. In this climate, there is a very obvious advantage, entirely apart from virtue, to some kinds of renunciation.

As I looked to the trail awaiting us, I decided that nylon-mesh shoes would do me no good in the mud, and furthermore I didn't want to have them completely wrecked, I removed the shoes and borrowed a pair of Indian sandals, the kind that have a thong looped around the big toe. I wrapped my raincoat around, cape-style, and then we set off.

Within the first five minutes, I finally removed the raincoat because it was too sticky underneath. Shortly thereafter, I took off my shirt, wadded it up, and added it to the little parcel that K, the quietest of our group, was carrying. And finally, I took off the borrowed sandals because they would stick in the mud, not only slowing me down, but also scraping my tender feet raw. So now I was barefooted, like the others. "Like Bhave," they laughed. "Now you see that it is the only way to walk in India. It's not just a preference for the ascetic."

In New Delhi, and even in Gaya, the talk had been of 7 miles over a *cutcha* road. I wish to report at this point that a *cutcha* road means no road at all. Now where, in the Indian countryside, do you walk when there is no road at all? Through paddy fields, rivers, and streams.

So that's where we walked. At first I was careful to avoid deep mud, dirty-looking mud. As time went on and I became more tired, the effort to turn aside from especially juicy-looking spots became too much for me. Although for the first few miles I thought frequently and somewhat desperately of germs, microbes, and parasites, finally they began to seem like lesser terrors than the terror of setting my bloody stumps on the ground once more. Finally, the muddier the place, the more it oozed through my toes, the better I liked it.

My fastidiousness peeled away layer by layer as we progressed from one agony to the greater agony of the next step. Mile after mile, hour after hour, my eyes fixed to the path before me, we walked, stumbled, groped, and pawed our way through the fields, down the flooded creeks, and athwart the crumbling dikes of the paddy fields. For a long time I worried about stepping in cows' dung. But at one point I flicked the sweat from my bleary eyes and looked with the utmost joy and anticipation at a lovely dungpad lying directly in my path. How deliciously cool on my fevered feet, how soft and squishy? But, I said to myself sternly, I shall not—shall *not*—step in human dung. Several miles later, when my muscles refused to turn the angle required to miss some by one inch, my foot descended easily and without protest into a mess, my eyes turned away, and I knew, Hallelujah, here I go.

We had known that the rivers were swollen—Bihar was then the worst-hit state in India—but somehow I had an image of fast-moving water pouring pleasantly over one's overheated feet. The reality of raging torrent, of swift and deceptive currents, left me a little breathless. Several we managed quite easily; others required linked arms;

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and finally, we had to call about ten peasants to join arms with us to get across a raging stream.

At each stage, the question would occur to me: why go on? Is it really worth it? I was assailed by all kinds of plausible pretexts for returning and having done with it. But then I would look at my four Gandhian friends, who were toiling on like myself for the sole purpose of helping me, and I knew that it was completely impossible to back off. For them, the niggling calculations that we ordinary mortals make do not have any meaning. We ask ourselves: is this worth it? Is the reward—or even the anticipation—worth the cost? We have some fixed implicit ratio, an economic calculation, which says "so much reward for so much effort." When there is too great a disproportion between the two terms of our equation, then we say, "this is not worth it." But the Gandhians evidently do not make this calculation. For them it is quite meaningless. If you want to do something, or if you think something is worth doing, you go ahead and do it, whatever the cost.

Six hours later we arrived at Kawakol Ashram, my body a mass of exquisite and hitherto unknown pains, my feet lacerated and swollen, but my spirit triumphant. JP was tenderly amused, and he gently arranged to have me made as comfortable as possible. We chatted for several hours, discussing Bhoodan and its problems, politics and public opinion, the revolution of the spirit and the revolution of the state. I fell asleep after seven cups of tea and lemon (I couldn't get any food down); someone gently gave me an anti-malaria pill (we were in the midst of a malarial area). I saw a rat scamper awkwardly under the thatch and I thought distantly that he might run across the floor where I was lying, and I hate rats—but I didn't care. I felt a mosquito and hoped vaguely that the pill worked, or else that the spirit of God relieved the physical as well as the spiritual ills in this place.

At 5 a.m. a bell sounded through the camp, people came astir, performed their morning ablutions silently. I walked back into my hut from the slit-trench latrine outside to bump into a pair of legs staring me in the face. My room mate was standing on his head, a morning exercise which he assured me is exceedingly good for the circulation of the blood. At 5.30 we gathered on the other side of the central compound for prayers, three women and about twelve men, the women facing the men, all seated on grass mats under a thatched-roof lean-to. First, as with the Quakers, several minutes of silent meditations; then songs from the Upanishads, led by one of the women, and sung with eyes closed.

It had been decided that in order for me to catch my train, I had better leave there no later than 10. After looking at my feet, JP decided that I could not walk back, so he sent a peasant out for an elephant. I must confess that I was not the least bit casual about the idea of riding an elephant. I was very impressed. As far as I am concerned, an elephant is, and always will be, a rather improbable animal whose proper habitat is the zoo. I will never be at ease with the idea that they can be part of everyday life. However, it seems that it was very common for wealthy landlords and temples in that district to own elephants. They served for pomp and for transport. And the site of JP's *ashram* had been given as a land gift by a very large landlord who happened to have an elephant. Unfortunately, however, the elephant was sick—a notion which leaves me slightly confused. So that was out.

Next they looked for a horse. Finally a spindly-shanked colt was brought in, hardly providing ground clearance, and so thin that his spine protruded like a steel shaft. Also, I must add, no saddle. The only way to hold on was by folding the legs around his belly; the slightest shift of weight and one would slip right off the side. So after a few attempts, I decided to walk.

All I can say is that the return trip was even worse, we had to make a bigger detour, and it took us more time to return to the *pukka* road. My companions, being saints or apprentice saints, ended with the same imperturbable good humour, if not quite the same fullness of breath, with which they started. I cannot say that my own tortured and set grin was their equal in spiritual grace. Every step was an agony. I had so many blisters and swollen places that I had to invent a new kind of walk in which the weight is placed simultaneously on the outer rim of the foot—with no pressure on the heel—and on the tip of the big toe. The alternative was to step on the blisters, the sores, and the tenderised soles. After a while it began to feel as if I were walking on exposed bone.

My fastidiousness, however, had been left behind a long time ago. I drank, without hesitation or thought of typhoid, cholera, or typhus, whatever water was offered me; and I ate roasted corn at a little wayside stop, whose proprietor was an ardent supporter of the Bhoodan movement. Wherever we went, peasants greeted us with the cry: *Sub Bhoomi Gopalki?*—"All Land Belongs to God?"—the slogan of the Bhoodan movement. One could sense how deep were the roots which it had struck. . . .

HERBERT PASSIN

Tokyo, Japan

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BOOKS

News from the Front

IT WOULD be very interesting to know whether the appreciation of past ages follows a regular pattern. I think it does but that the process whereby obsolete fashion becomes an object of ridicule and then of sentimental affection is liable to be so accelerated in an age of increasing speed, like our own, that it seems to be radically changed. The saying that *les grandpères ont toujours tort* is no longer true. The modern young man or girl's grandfather was Edwardian and the grandson tends to romanticise the old man's young days already. He even shows occasional signs of romanticising his father's young life in the twenties. In proportion effects of distance are quickly achieved. Great-grandfathers have become legendary, and the Victorians are already material for a Gothic revival. How was it in slower-moving times? When did Victorians begin to thrill to the Regency? Not much till the age of Meredith for the few and Orchardson's paintings for the many. It was a part of Thackeray's success, I believe, that he led the way to a sentimental affection for the early and central 18th century during the middle years of its successor. If that is true, the irony of his subsequent fate is considerable. We revere the great Victorians, except this one who first taught us to see "the adorable century" through rose-coloured glasses. We hang on to the specs but we are not grateful to the donor. It needs boldness in Professor Tillotson* to assert that Thackeray was a great novelist. The author of *Vanity Fair* has been standing in the corner for nearly fifty years.

Of course he does not stand there without reason. He had a great many faults, almost as many as Shakespeare, but it remains a matter for curiosity that none of the faults has been forgiven by the critics to this perennially delightful writer. It is not as though the faults are peculiar to himself. It is held against him that he lavished his great talents on paltry themes, such as the minutiæ of class distinctions, what happens at dinner parties, snobbishness, and so on, but when Henry James allowed his ample mind to be set in motion by a penny in the slot (to remember Desmond MacCarthy's wondrous image), the critics assert that he was privileged, and we resent the propaganda of H. G. Wells. A graver accusation is that Thackeray ruined what might have been splendid novels by introducing his personal commentary into them. The same fault (if it is a fault) is to be found, and is forgiven, in the works of George Eliot, and Proust. It cannot be denied that Thackeray sometimes gives way to an intolerable degree of sentimentality over some of his women. The same fault was once thought intolerable in Dickens. Why has opinion not been revised in the case of Dickens's rival?

Professor Tillotson expends most of his defensive energy in an endeavour to show that the commentaries are not really such terrible things as modern criticism wants us to believe. In two very interesting chapters he dissects the first person as used by Thackeray, shows the pains he took to position this away from the

* *Thackeray the Novelist.* By GEOFFREY TILLOTSON. Cambridge University Press. 22s. 6d.

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author's own person and life and opinions, and claims that in the result he achieved a marvellous synthesis of comment and narration. The defence is spirited and extreme and nothing is given to the enemy. I think nevertheless that a strategical withdrawal might have been sagacious here, for when all is said the fact remains that a large number of commentaries, all the coy ones especially, are as "awful" as the critics say, and when Max Beerbohm (a true Thackerayan) speaks of his "shallowest sermon" he says nothing unjust. That the enemy are on favourable ground for attack at this point is almost proved by the fact that the superior character of *Esmond* over the other novels (in artistry not power) is due to the circumstance that only in this story did Thackeray position his first person quite perfectly, with the result, achieved nowhere else in his work, that comment and narration do run together in a marvellous unity which is not only never broken but is beautifully clear to every reader. I believe that Professor Tillotson ought to have yielded something on the commentaries themselves and then to have pushed farther forward on another sector of this harassed front. It is beyond doubt that Thackeray himself was quite aware that he was pursuing an ungainly method. "Of all novel-spinners extant" he wrote, "the present speaker is most addicted to preaching." But whereas his method is defended throughout this book as though he deliberately chose it as suited to his notions of how novels ought to be written, it may occur to people with experience of writing that he had no great choice in the matter, and that only by indulging a deep impulse towards sermonising could he release those other impulses which made him the great writer he was. That way the question can be reduced to a simple and, as I believe, a true form: are Thackeray's lapses such as to put him out of the first class? Or to put the question in terms suited to this great entertainer: is the agony of the many lapses worth it for the sake of the reward? Since there are parallels with the case of Dickens in this part of the argument the coupling of their names may be allowed momentarily. We suffer the Maileys and Co., and horrible little Oliver Twist himself, suffer them cheerfully as the price we must pay in order to have Bumble and Bill and Fagin and Nancy and Mrs. Sowerberry. Personally I would rate Major Pendennis as worth fifty coy commentaries, and cheap at the price. But this is a very different thing to saying that the commentaries are as wise as they are supposed to be, and that is what Professor Tillotson seems to want us to believe.

There is one very unexpected defence in the book, one which can recall that used in the case of poor Marshal Bazaine. It is claimed for Thackeray that he is deserving of reverence because he was but an ordinary man much magnified. Whatever the intention, the whole of this section reads like a plea that the common man should not miss the chance of taking this common author to his bosom while his—the common man's century—is still running. It is asserted that Thackeray can be proved ordinary by his concentration of interest on everyday subjects and interests. With this argument Fielding and Jane Austen and many more unlikely candidates must be considered ordinary with him. Some of the evidence put forward seems to prove the opposite of the case it is hoped to support. Professor Tillotson says that Thackeray's indecisiveness and passiveness is the sort of thing "that the common man

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respects as wise," and thus presumably makes author and public one. I would have thought that a weakness of the common man was that he so readily despised indecision and usually mistook an opinionated mind for a strong one. We are told that if Thackeray "has little space in his novels for the purely æsthetic, that is because the common man has little space for it in his life." The Professor is clearly unaware that æsthetics go very ill in all novels, and that they are best introduced as reference points, and then kept well out of the reader's reach. *The Madonna of the Future*, *The Modern Warning*, and *The Figure in the Carpet* show the right way to deal with such material, and this was Thackeray's way in *Pendennis*. It has nothing remotely to do with commonness.

This curious interlude in praise of the common man is possibly a reaction on the part of the defence to some powerful ammunition in their arsenal. Many thousand copies of *Vanity Fair* and the rest of the novels are sold every year in spite of warnings by leaders of critical opinion that these famous books are not worth serious attention, and that to read them is a foolish and even blameworthy exercise. Yet all unconscious of wrongdoing the "reading mob" (to borrow again from Max Beerbohm) reads the books and likes them. This is the explosive and maddening fact which causes tempers to be lost amid uneasy feelings that the siege ought to be over by now, and that time is running short. While the enemy grows desperate, the defenders get drunk in anticipation of victory.

The most determined, ruthless, and gifted of the enemy leaders does not come into the battleground of this book till the very end, where space is made for him in an appendix. Dr. F. R. Leavis is quoted from *The Great Tradition*, that remarkable work of criticism and revaluation in which he gave one paragraph only to Thackeray. The paragraph is given in full, and here is the central utterance: "His attitudes, and the essential substance of interest, are so limited that (though, of course, he provides incident and plot) for the reader it is merely a matter of going on and on; nothing has been done by the close to justify the space taken—except, of course, that time has been killed (which seems to be all that even some academic critics demand of a novel)." He concludes the paragraph by saying that "the conventional estimate that puts [Thackeray] among the great won't stand the touch of criticism." No one has a finer understanding than Dr. Leavis of the prophets and priests who have adorned literature, but no one is farther at sea than this purist and puritan when he undertakes to consider a purveyor. This order to Thackeray that it is time for him to quit the hall of fame can remind one of similar orders, prompted by other theories, which have been addressed during the last thirty years to Kipling, Conrad, Anatole France, and nearly all Dutch painters, besides a host of still honoured musical composers. Such orders are rarely obeyed.

Professor Tillotson does not counter Dr. Leavis by insisting on the large place in human affairs occupied by cakes and ale, nor on the depth of the human desire for entertainment, nor on the rare skill, wit and wisdom needed to succeed in such great undertakings as the killing of time. Instead he insists that two of Dr. Leavis's accepted authors, Henry James and George Eliot, were not only in "the great tradition" but were actually successors of Thackeray. In the case of George Eliot the succession is not difficult to see and acknowledge, and her debt to him was not on account of weaknesses. In the case of Henry James there was certainly admiration in his early years, but it is not easy to say whether influence was dominant and formative at any time. An ingeniously worked out parallel between the bowl of *The Golden Bowl* and the broken cup in Chapter V of *The Virginians* is too ingenious to be convincing. More so is the parallel between *The Lesson of the Master* and *The Bedford Row Conspiracy* though the theme common to both is not so strikingly original as to rule out unconscious memory or even coincidence. Professor Tillotson is obliged to own that whatever the degree of influence exerted by Thackeray on Henry James it was not cherished in the latter's maturity. It is certain that Henry James's admiration was quite forgotten in his later and intolerant years, but those who would take courage from this to press the siege ought to reflect that along with *The Newcomes* the narrow old mandarin would also have consigned *War and Peace* to the dustbin.

There is one remarkable omission in Professor Tillotson's book which is common to most books written on Thackeray today on both sides of the war. There is as little

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discussion of his humour here as in Professor Greig's sour little "reconsideration." *The Bedford Row Conspiracy*, *The Legend of the Rhine* and *A Little Dinner at Timmins's* are masterpieces in their kind, and one would imagine that even Dr. Leavis must be able to obtain delight from *The Rose and The Ring*. Some of the drawings for *Punch* are as fresh and funny today as they were a hundred years ago. This freshness in humour makes it very odd, in the last resort, that people should dislike Thackeray so much, and should go to such pains to refuse to acknowledge his undeniable greatness, or to forgive the faults he shares with all other Victorians save one. The main reason for the asperity is, I believe, one indicated by Mr. Walter Allen in his remarkable book *The English Novel*: Thackeray by the nature of his achievement must be judged with the supreme masters, and this keeps certain unflattering comparisons ever in view. In the work of Fielding, Jane Austen, Tolstoy, and other writers of genius, we are often surprised at unexpected implications which come to us on a re-reading. There is nothing of this experience in Thackeray: like Zola he plays a music without overtones. But how haunting that music can be nevertheless! Max Beerbohm has given the best description of Thackeray's art at its loveliest: "He blew on his pipe, and words came tripping round him like children, like pretty little children who are perfectly drilled for the dance, or came, did he will it, treading in their precedence, like kings, gloomily."

Christopher Sykes

BYGONES

TRADE advertisements frequently lure the imagination, while baffling the understanding. We have the sensation of cavesdroppers, able to hear all the words but excluded from comprehension by some private use of language to which we do not yet possess the key. If we could contact and question an initiate, all would be made plain: meanwhile the uninstructed fancy is left free to wander.

Instruction, in fact, is liable to bring disappointment. I remember, in Cairo, coming upon a small discreet brass oblong that read, simply

J. ABDUL HAMID: expert

How long did I not speculate upon this excellent M. Hamid, who for all I knew was running the world single-handed! Surely it is in some such little third-floor office, up a not-so-scrubbed stair and behind a not-so-polished name-plate, that the ultimate controller of power may be expected to lie. . . . Or again, how very gratified the BBC would be to obtain M. Hamid's services: in England, where apparently the definition of "expert" is "a person who has been invited to speak by the BBC" ("Well, Mrs. Kipper, you have two children, so I suppose you are quite an expert on Child Psychology?" "Well yase, I suppose I am . . ."), how they would welcome and adulate M. Abdul Hamid, the expert *sans* subject, or even pseudo-subject, the expert *per se*! Alas! I learned that "Expert" was the French equivalent of "Valuer," and *Farewell, dreams*!

It was C. E. Montague, I think, who had an even nastier shock: for weeks he had passed a small board which said

DEALER IN ROMANCEMENT

until one fatal day he observed a little gap between the N and C. . . .

WHEN therefore I came upon the notice (in a trade journal)

WANTED: to buy or exchange Bygones

I speculated with some trepidation. Of Bygones as nouns I knew nothing beyond the proverbial injunction to maintain their *status quo*: this, though couched in a form that would provide good basic material for Miss Gertrude Stein, seemed not to the present purpose.

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Could the thing be some veiled marriage-proposal ("My dear, let us exchange our Pasts, so that we may share our Futures!")? But then, the implication of "buy"? Could it be some patientless apprentice psychiatrist willing to pay even, in his desperation, for someone to Reveal All? It seemed hardly likely. Could it? —at this point I met the Knowledgeable Man:

"Bygones? Oh yes: milking-stools, smocks, rushlight-holders, spinning-wheels—"

"?"

"Cider-presses, hand-churns, horn-spoons. . . ."

"You mean," I said, "all inefficient hand-constructed rural objects made obsolescent in the day 'when steam outspun the wind and stream'."

"Local museums," he said, "are keen to get hold of them."

THE unwary or foreign observer might have assumed from this exchange that neither the Knowledgeable Man nor I was much of a sucker for Bygones. He would, of course, have been wrong. Behind the carefully English fronts of sarcastic indifference lurked two large English lumps in the throat. Bygones are a part of our national sentimentality.

They are not of course the only matters to conjure up those lumps, or even to start an entirely uninvited tear into an unexpectant eye—for the essence of sentimentality is that it produces emotion without either reflection or rational causation. Anyone desirous of charting out the limits of his own sentimentality should obtain a large mirror, stare intently into the depths of it, and repeat slowly selections from the following phrases:

Yes, even the Margate pleasure-steamers paddled over to the beaches of Dunkirk;

The old man's hands shook as he thumbed in the poor little geranium cuttings;

But alas! Jane Austen never had a room of her own;

On the high altar itself (of Westminster Abbey) are two candlesticks which were paid for out of the savings of the cook at Westminster School, who in 1694 bequeathed all she had for the purpose;

The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here;

Kensington Fire Station was the last in London to use horses: returning from the last fire about Christmas time in 1921, the two bay mares, Lucy and Nora, were received in state by the chief of the L.C.C., who gave them sugar and carrots from a silver tray;

Long after the last stone of the cottage had vanished, snowdrops and periwinkles from its little garden bloomed on in the encroaching wood—

or whatever others of his own choosing sort better with his sensibility (e.g., for those of an older generation than myself, *Brave little Belgium!*). If at any point he is surprised by the sudden lump and tear (and at the same time feels himself to despise and disown them—as, for example, we may weep against our will, despising our tears, at the contrived conclusion of a third-rate commercial play), he should repeat the phrase over and over with precisely the same intonation until he is entirely proof against it. This exercise is less frivolous than it sounds: if the Germans, for instance, had thus purged themselves of Places in the Sun and *Deutschland, Deutschland*, we might find ourselves with less to be *really* sorry for today.

I HAVE been led into this chain of reflection by the perusal of *Sing a Song of England*,* by Mr. Reginald Nettel. This is, or purports to be, "a social history of England, illustrated by its traditional songs": and folksong, ballad and broadside fall decidedly in the "bygones" class. Furthermore I am (perhaps so peculiarly) constituted that the following item has always jerked an especially ready tear:

On November 5th, at Shebbear, Devon, a boulder of rock weighing several tons, and shaped like a flattened egg, and which stands near the churchyard, is completely turned over with staves and crowbars soon after sundown. A peal on the church bells is rung before and after the ceremony.

It is (at first sight) a splendidly irrational tear, and I have therefore been at some pains to analyse it. The immediate cause is not so hard to detect: the faithful story-book rustics clinging to the outward and visible form of some pagan mystery long after the inward and invisible meaning has been forgotten. But the deeper cause, I believe, lies in the sense of exile. As our "roots" are the most hidden—and least amenable to reason—things about us, so their severance leads to the profoundest and least intellectualised of our anxieties and despairs.

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* *Sing a Song of England.* By REGINALD NETTEL. Phoenix House. 21s.

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Most of us in this country have been fortunate enough to escape the crudely material exile from a native land; but we are all irredeemably banished from certain golden countries of the mind—from the soil by our technics, from innocence by our education, from childhood by our birth-certificates, from "free love" by our Judaic marriage system and taboos, above all from matriarchy and natural religion by the duumvirate of Christ and Apollo. We peep from the outside between the palings of mental, sexual, and religious Arcadias.

In so far as this is a true analysis, however, so much the more deeply and bitterly rational, after all, turns out this particular tear—it is not so sentimental as it superficially appeared. It may be foolish to cry over spilt milk, but at least the milk was in this instance real; what we have lost we cannot recover but at least it was partly there; and when we weep for bygones it is at least for a not wholly illusory Eden. (Sentimentality, on the other hand, is the crying over spilt milk that was never there.)

Hence much of the Christian malaise. Hence too the flourishing of the Folk Song Society, and Mr. Nettel. *Sing a Song of England* is in no sense a profound or scholarly book. The author seems rather to have thumbed through a chestful of assorted bygones, picked out his private tear-jerkers and lump-summoners, and arranged them in roughly chronological order together with rather half-hearted connecting paragraphs. Thus, in a book which claims (as I have said) to confine itself to English social history as illustrated by traditional song (and accordingly excludes Scottish material entirely, although the South of Scotland and the North of England have always formed a single cultural area), he has nevertheless found room for photographs of the Uffington White Horse and the Cerne Giant and for accounts of Negro spirituals in Virginia. Indeed I think it must be said that the author's materials and his intention are far superior to his execution. It is pleasant to have the words of the songs, and the musical illustrations are accurate and numerous; but the general plan is inchoate and incoherent, and the particular treatments disconnected and too often merely opinionated rather than properly critical. Mr. Nettel writes as badly as (I am afraid) we have come to expect of the average musicologist—perhaps it is too much to hope that he should be literate in both the musical and the literary languages at once. His verti-

ginous, and apparently unconscious, changes of subject make heavy going after a few pages, so does his unvarying positiveness—he always comes down firmly on one side or the other, but, a few lines later, without noticing that he has changed horses, just as firmly on the other side or the one. He has, moreover, the rather tiresome habit of setting up Aunt Sallies many of which seem to be rather the products of an embittered imagination than external realities: needless to say, he then topples them with some cantankerousness and little difficulty, but neither the practice nor the manner are endearing ones:

> Even in the Edwardian period there was a demand for great music, though our resources were more limited. Every town—even those which had taken on the evil appearance of industrialism—had its choir. Sir Hubert Parry knew this in 1899 when he spoke at the first annual meeting of the Folk Song Society. His detractors make much of his dependence on the then modern theory of evolution, but how many of them have seen it in true perspective? He stood in a tradition, he made a variation on it, and society has used its privilege of selection upon that variation. His detractors have but added another variation. The proof of it? Turn back to Parry's speech in 1899 and read it again, with all your little smattering of post-Parry psychology.

Whether by "you" the author means "the reader" or "Parry's detractors," the tone of this last sentence (which is by no means an isolated example) seems to me as gratuitously ill-mannered as the sentence itself is foolish. The giddy *non sequiturs* of this paragraph, incidentally, are representative of the writing throughout.

The plan of the book itself seems in some respects too narrow. For one thing, the concentration upon *surviving* traditional song appears unreal: when dealing with the medieval period, for instance, Mr. Nettel confines himself to such material as was still obtainable from the lips of 19th century rustics (a typically Folk Song Society attitude), without a word or hint of the wealth of contemporary songs and music preserved in medieval MSS. But the author seems to have equally little idea of what it is proper to exclude from a book of this nature. The actual folk-song material is (as I have said) remarkably well chosen, and Mr. Nettel's purely musical comments are almost always interesting and just: but his adventures into literary judgment are usually disastrous—

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it is scarcely helpful, for instance, to dismiss *The Beggar's Opera* as "this sordid pot-boiler" —and the expression of his personal political convictions (Socialist-naïf) is quite out of place and an unwarranted imposition on the reader.

With these handicaps therefore, it is natural that Mr. Nettel should write much more satisfactorily of modern than of ancient times. It is not to be expected that his comments on natural religion should be of any value; indeed his paragraph on John Barleycorn—

> John Barleycorn is creator, destroyer, alchemist, and friend. This is the corn spirit in a brown mug, and soon he will be in you. He will give you life, for he is the essence of life. Do all you can to kill him and again he will revive. He is not for a day but for all time. In reverence of him they cut the White Horse on the hill and the virile figure in the chalk at Cerne Abbas; for his worship they toiled to make the stone circles on the uplands; they buried their dead with gifts which would be useful when the dead awakened; they danced the dance of life and death, or rather death and life, for that is what they wished. Etc. etc.—

is one of several that beg so many horribly debatable questions in such rapid succession that the mind boggles. But when he sums up the English 19th century as "the age of the Chartists and the Tolpuddle martyrs," we are in a position to make allowances for this innocent *simplesse*, and to extract whatever is valuable from his treatment accordingly. Indeed Mr. Nettel has the good sense (by no means universal among musicologists) to realise that the book of folksong is in no way closed, and that "Lili Marlene" and the Square Dance are just as much a part of his subject as "Robbin-a-Bobbin" or "Sellenger's Round": and in most ways the concluding chapters of *Sing a Song of England*, in which the author "wades through the jungle" of 19th century broad-sheet or deals with Cecil Sharp or Kipling, are the best.

If I have judged Mr. Nettel by too high a standard, it has been in the light of the excellence of his own material. For this ought to have been a thoroughly good book. A great deal of well-applied care and skill and judgement has obviously gone into the selection and preparation of the examples, but the presentation has largely spoiled them; and a definitive popular work on this subject remains to be written. Perhaps next time the author will be persuaded to give us a straight anthology: I cannot imagine anyone better qualified and able to do so, and the result should be extraordinarily interesting.

MEANWHILE, I would still recommend *Sing a Song of England* as a means of stimulating the reader's own speculations (while he may care to sidestep those of Mr. Nettel); and I will close with a single further speculation of my own:

Why is there so little *poetry* here? How should we account for the extreme *poetical* poverty of English folksong from the 18th century on? Occasionally there is a verse of haunting beauty:

Often when I am slumbering, I have a pleasant dream,
With my sweet girl I am sitting, down by some purling stream;
Through England I am roaming, with her at my command,
Then waken broken-hearted upon Van Diemen's Land. (Van Diemen's Land.)

But even here I feel that the effect is mainly adventitious, for the name "Van Diemen's Land" has acquired a romantic aura since the original author's day. And for the most part the texture of the verse is uniformly undistinguished, or mere doggerel:

Over hedges, ditches, gates and rails,
Our dogs followed after behind our heels;
If he had catched us, say what you will,
He'd have sent us all to Abingdon jail.
(Poaching Song.)

Is the mediocrity of the mass a necessary corollary of the excellence of the individual? Since the 17th century we have been strong in great poets, weak in great musicians: yet "the people" have been (comparatively speaking) musically alive and poetically dead. Does the individual English artist flourish only in opposition to an art-hating populace? Why is it impossible for us to imagine an English Burns?

For the position is entirely different in Scotland. Anyone who cares to glance into Ord's *Bothy Ballads* (mainly 19th century Scottish farm-house songs) will find it studded with verses like this:

Then were the days when I never had care,
But brown as a tod and as wild as a hare
I scoured thro' the heather and kissed the wild bells,
And pu'd the wi d roses that grew in the vales.
(The Herdie.)

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or this:

Adam's wine and heather bells
Comes rattlin' ower yon gloomy hills;
There's corn rigs in yonder fells
And autumn brings the shearing!
(The Gallant Shearers.)

For that matter *Van Diemen's Land* itself is quite probably of Scottish origin; and even the Scottish doggerel is seldom without merit of a kind (the house-maid replies to the plough-boy's proposal):

And you know every morning I rise out of bed
The servant must have my breakfast well made,
With beef steaks and biscuits, buns, sugar and tea,
As something like treatment for ladies like me.
(Geordie asking Miss Tiptoe in Marriage.)

Is it a reflection of the high rate of Scottish literacy during the period? Or are both these symptomatic only of some deeper cultural distinction? Is it—but at this point the reader had better tiptoe away quietly and leave me to my bygones.

Hilary Corke

THE OTHER RUSSIA

When in London recently, I was trying to convey to a friend some idea of the nature of large-scale industrial undertakings in the Soviet Union. I mentioned the millions of forced labourers—I was myself one of them—used in opening up the Kolyma goldfields, and he said, "Oh yes, I know; it's like Australia. Australia at first was also colonised by convicts." It was clear: he knew nothing.

Antoni Ekart suggests that his Western readers will find it as difficult to understand life in Russia, as he describes it in *Vanished Without Trace*,* as the Eskimos found it to understand the tale of one of their countrymen who had returned from a visit to Denmark and was trying to describe houses built of timber and stone. But it seems to me more probable that, out of emotional inertia and indifference to such strange and remote destinies, he will simply not be heard at all. People are so reluctant to read about such things; it is far more pleasant to read about the Russian football players, or about what is "really" happening inside the Kremlin, or simply to recollect an old comradeship in arms—there were some good fellows among the Russians, even among the officers.

Well, you can find all that in Antoni Ekart's book too—sports champions, inside stories from the Kremlin, wartime friendships. And what he was able to find out about these matters is far more accurate than the reports of even the most famous of American correspondents. Don't smile at the idea that the best way to understand the Soviet world is to have spent some years in a forced-labour camp. It really is true. Eight years of "freedom" in Soviet Russia revealed to me only a fraction of what I learnt in the first of my subsequent eight years of imprisonment about the life of its people, the privileged as well as the destitute.

It is one of the peculiarities of Soviet life that it has two wholly different sides, one official and external, the other unofficial and internal. Officially there are, for example, no railway accidents or fires; there is neither murder nor prostitution, and it is only recently that something has been heard of corruption. Yet it is quite obvious that all these things happen in Russia as they do everywhere else. In the camps you hear all about them. And you also hear the true stories behind purges and shake-ups of political personnel—and why not, since sooner or later the people involved turn up in one camp or another? Above all, it is only in the camps that political ideas are discussed comparatively openly.

The camp inmates represent one of the most important groups of the Soviet population, a group which cannot be ignored numerically, politically, or in relation to the country's

* *Vanished Without Trace.* By Antoni Ekart. Max Parrish. 16s.

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economy. Just as you cannot think of Hitler's Germany without its concentration camps and gas ovens, so you cannot dissociate the U.S.S.R. from its gigantic army of slaves. I know that the magnitude of forced labour in the Soviet Union has been bitterly debated among the Soviet specialists, and I was assured by one of them in the Foreign Office that the number could not be greater than five million, "otherwise the régime would collapse." It pains me to cast doubt on the competence of my friend in the Foreign Office, but the very reverse is true: without the slave army, which numbers from 20 to 30 million, the industrialisation of the U.S.S.R. on the present scale would be quite impossible. Antoni Ekart calculates this number of his former companions from data supplied by a high-ranking NKVD official sent as a prisoner to his camp in 1947. German prisoners of war who have recently returned give similar figures on the basis of information supplied by former MVD officials in 1953; and I myself calculated, in conjunction with comrades from a number of different camps, that there were more than twenty million forced labourers in the U.S.S.R. The magnitude of this figure indicates the importance of the camps as part of Soviet life. Clearly, those who do not know the camps, know not Russia.

VANISHED WITHOUT TRACE can be read as an account of the colonisation of the Soviet north. Ekart describes the roads, the bridges, and the railways built in the vast expanses of the Komi Autonomous Republic when he was there. He gives the figures for coal output, which increased tenfold, and for oil, which was just beginning; there is a really impressive picture of a hospital built in the far north to study the influence of the Arctic climate on the heart, lungs, etc. The director of this well-equipped hospital, which, he says, stands comparison with any similar institution in the West, was Professor Tslatkovsky, a doctor well known in Moscow at one time, who had considerable influence in the Ministry of Health even after he had been sentenced as a "counter revolutionary" and was given the permission and the means to establish the hospital. All the Professor's assistants and most of his patients were convicts too, like the thousands who died, mostly of starvation, in the far less comfortable hospital blocks of the camps in which Ekart worked for many years as medical orderly.

There are portraits of missing people, too. Ekart met two of the three Starostin brothers, eminent footballers well known to the older generation in the West. At one time their names were as well known in Russia as Nurmi's in Finland. All three were given a ten-year sentence for "counter-revolutionary activity"; their explanation was that they had been abroad too much and talked to their friends about what they had seen.

Aleksei Kapler, whom Ekart also met in camp in 1944, was a highly talented journalist and film producer who had received the Order of Lenin for his work on the film *Lenin in October*. During the war he was a *Pravda* correspondent and took part in the battle of Stalingrad. In 1943 he was arrested and received a ten-year sentence for "counter-revolutionary agitation." It turned out that he had become friendly with Stalin's daughter Svetlana; she was nineteen at the time, and they corresponded with each other, and obviously Papa Stalin was displeased.

Colonel Yakovlev, an artillery expert sentenced to ten years for alleged espionage (before the war he had kept up a correspondence with friends in Lvov) told Ekart how the NKVD detachments used to operate in the rear of the Soviet armies; their job was to keep troops from deserting, and in carrying it out they had to shoot large numbers of their own men.

Grigori Roginsky, deputy state prosecutor to Vyshinsky during the Moscow trials, and later sentenced to fifteen years forced labour in the north, gave Ekart some insight into the peculiar thought processes of a Party member who is loyal even behind barbed wire, while Tukhachevsky's daughter showed him that Stalin did not forget even the children of his enemies. Svetlana Tukhachevsky was eleven years old when her father was shot, and the NKVD waited until she was seventeen before passing a five-year sentence on her as a "socially dangerous element."

ANTONI EKART was not only in prisons and camps in the U.S.S.R. For one year he was free. He was not amnestied and allowed to join the Anders army, on the strange ground that he was a Jew and could not therefore serve in a Polish army. Then, in the usual way, he was pressed into the NKVD spy service. The chapter in which this procedure is described will strike many English readers as in

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the highest degree improbable, and yet I know from what my own friends have told me that this is the way it is done. "We will set you free," Ekart was told by the examining judge, "on condition that you help us to expose the German spies among the Jews from Lodz who are working in the factories here."

Ekart tried to evade this nonsensical demand, but in the end he was tricked into consenting, and for a year, while working as a free man in an Ivanovo bread factory and occupying a high position there, he had a regular appointment once a week with an NKVD official. All his thoughts were concentrated on handing in reports that would injure nobody, and when it became clear that they were valueless, that is, that they led to no arrests, Ekart was sent back to the camp. His account of the sufferings of the Russian people during the war is shattering. Terror was added to hunger, and speculation and corruption flourished. In a few sentences he demolishes the rosy picture of "patriotic Russian people devoted to their party and their government." Their sufferings were borne in hatred and fear, in the hopeless expectation of being crushed between two equally inhuman dictatorships.

Fortunately for the author of *Vanished without Trace,* he was a Pole. It is not often in history that membership in this unfortunate people has brought good luck. Because he was a Pole, Ekart was traced and saved. He describes how his comrades in the camps and prisons would say to him, enviously, "You're a Pole, your government won't forget you. You can hope. It's different for us; for us there is no hope."

This hope had a slender foundation. All trace of him had been lost. In spite of the amnesty, thousands of arrested Poles were never set free; only a few were saved. Protracted negotiations were carried on in case after case, each stubbornly fought. Ekart owed his freedom to the coincidence of a number of fortunate circumstances, particularly the post-war confusion and the goodwill of a few Polish officials. And that should not be forgotten when co-existence is being discussed. Antoni Ekart was freed "from outside," and the West can exert pressure strong enough to make the traces of at least some of the vanished visible again.

One last word. Antoni Ekart's book describes the situation in Russia and in the camps as it was during the war and immediately after. Seven years have passed since then; Stalin has died and Beria has been executed. We know from Scholmer's *Vorkuta,** which has also recently appeared in England, and from Brigitte Gerland's writings (in German) that there have been many changes in the camps. But that does not in any way diminish the value of Ekart's book, which remains a contemporary, and not merely an historical, document. Though the rations may have been increased and some of the most extreme barbarities eliminated, all those who were in forced-labour camps with Ekart are still there, unless they were extraordinarily lucky, or are dead. To their families and to the world they remain vanished without trace.

Alfred Burmeister

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* *Vorkuta.* By JOSEPH SCHOLMER. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 15s.

THE ERRORS OF FORMALISM

IN A lean season the reviewer of novels is forced to reflect on the first principles of his somewhat empirical craft. For whom do I review, he wonders, and so is led on to ask, why do people read novels? If he rejects the pure philistine, Harold Nicolson or novel-as-aspirin answer, he is likely to plump for some such large and vacant affirmation of purpose as the enlargement of experience. A modest covering of flesh can be put on these bones by interpreting this enlargement simply as the satisfaction of curiosity about others. The existence of a

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great number of people who are both leisured and literate may explain how it is that people *can* read novels and how it is that their production and distribution is an industrial possibility. What it does not explain is why people *do* read novels. The crucial feature of our civilisation in this connection is the fact that we know perhaps only one in a hundred of the people we see every day. But we cannot ignore the other ninety-nine, cannot inhumanly compress them within their immediate functions, for at any moment one of them may inspire in us jealousy, admiration, desire, or disgust. Novels can compensate for the oppressive anonymity of our human environment and can fortify the imagination on which our sense of common humanity rests. As a habitual practice the reading of novels serves, in a generalised way, the same purpose as gossip.

The point of these platitudes is that they emphasise the significance of mere information and this may explain the absence, to which our attention is repeatedly drawn, of adequate standards for the criticism of fiction. Such textbooks of fiction-criticism as there are (E. M. Forster, Percy Lubbock, Elizabeth Bowen's "Notes") are predominantly technical in character, they provide guidance for writers rather than readers. It is not merely the three-quarter truth, asserted by Robert Graves, that for poetry these two classes are identical, that explains the inarticulateness of critical standards for fiction relatively to those for poetry. Crudely, the reading of poetry is an exploration of ourselves, the reading of novels is an exploration of others.

Technical canons notoriously come to grief on the brute fact of recognised masterpieces. *The Idiot* and *Women in Love* are great books despite the former's chaotic development and the latter's repetitiveness and expository lumps. Yet the critic of fiction, from his desire to communicate, to occupy a recognisable position, is constantly resting his judgements of value on the technical qualities of the works he considers, is reluctant in speaking of their interestingness, concentrates on the strokes and ignores the score. And so what should come first is, after an embarrassed "nevertheless," placed last. If what we read novels for, the need of which supports the novel as an institution, is the increase of our understanding of our human environment, a high professional gloss is of secondary importance.

This principle is confirmed by Thomas Mann's recent short novel *The Black Swan**, a portentously expressed physiological fable which concerns the flaring-up of passion in a middle-aged German colonel's widow, soon after her change of life, for the young American who teaches her some English. (His name, Ken Keaton, with its echo of Buster, has something of the flavour of the Lord Robinson who crops up in French fiction.) Rosalie, a cheerful, trivial woman, expresses in her dying words the somewhat unrealistically explicit faith by which she has lived: "Nature—I have always loved her and she—has always been loving to her child." But here lies the highly contrived irony on which the whole story rests, for the hæmorrhage which she took to be a return by nature of her sexual vitality is in fact a symptom of the cancer that destroys her. This unlikely concoction is presented largely in the form of a dialogue between Rosalie and her crippled ratiocinative daughter with a Drobny-like precision and dexterity. The debate of Nature-worship and critical reason pursues its course with fulsome and exquisite politeness in unmitigatedly public tones of voice. Even Rosalie's self-communings have an unearthly public quality: "Good God, I love him, yes, love him, as I have never loved, is it possible? Here I am, retired from active service, translated by Nature to the calm, dignified estate of matronhood. Is it not grotesque that I should give myself up to lust, as I do in my frightened, blissful thoughts at the sight of him, at the sight of his godlike arms, by which I insanely long to be embraced, at the sight of his magnificent chest, which, in wretchedness and rapture, I saw outlined under his jersey," etc. This peculiar abstract convention is adhered to throughout, the development of the narrative is perfectly timed, the selection of detail is impeccable. But the unquestionable professional mastery fails in its purpose, for the plump, agonised lady shrivels away into a deduction from a metaphysical hypothesis. The form of fiction is inappropriate to this puppet-drama of ideas. Nevertheless, as a sheer literary performance, it is worth reading.

A comparable defect marks Louis Auchincloss's comparably accomplished book of

* *The Black Swan*. By Thomas Mann. Secker and Warburg. 8s. 6d.

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stories, *The Romantic Egoists**. The book is described as a reflection in eight mirrors, a reflection presumably of Peter Westcott, the narrator, whose dim presence links the stories. But, though dim, he is familiar enough, being an instance of that tiresome convention, the knowing I-figure who observes but is not implicated, a faint shadow of the prince of Lifemen, Andrey Bolkonsky. Where one of the egoists clogs the usual channels with demands that the U.S. Navy make use of his hotel-running experience, the narrator manages to have his cake and eat it by at once conforming to and recognising the purely conventional nature of the requirement that all naval personnel should constantly express longing for active service at sea. These smug, marginal figures with their worldly liberalism and their divine inability to go beyond the moral pale, are the precise inverse of the excesses of Rousseau's self-portrait, but even less attractive. The implication of connivance with the reader—we're men of the world who know what's what—expresses a kind of moral snobbery which devalues all those excluded from the charmed circle. Only one of these stories is more than adroit caricature, that which deals with Henry Everett, a Holmesian old lawyer whom the author displays some respect for and interest in. But the rest—the earnest young inheritor of wealth, the divorcée, the mother-suffocated expatriate—bear too noticeably the marks of their first appearance, they have the mechanical shine of the magazines for which they were created. They are closed accounts, the author has taken their measure and nothing has eluded classification. This Maugham-like finish and deadness is a disappointment after Auchincloss's earlier books, *The Injustice Collectors* and *Sybil*. No doubt he has been annoyed by the recurrent comparison of his work with that of Edith Wharton. But this book does not deserve it, for where she was fascinated by people he shows here only a laboriously sophisticated amusement.

NATHANIEL BURT'S *Scotland's Burning*† is a familiar enough kind of book, but despite this, and despite the slightly oppressive mannerednes of the prose, it exacts more respect. The sensitive young hero, shiveringly conscious of his distance from the school community around him, the self-contained villain, carrying out egoistic experiments on his friends, the squalid son of a poor widowed mother who indulges in illicit pleasures, the cultivated master with gramophone records and emotional troubles of his own, the bogus headmaster—these have for the novel-addict the consoling usualness of the characters in Punch and Judy. And a certain despair assails the reader as he comes across such statements as this: "as we left the classroom he would join me, forcing Alan to tag along, clapping me on the shoulder so that I had to grit my teeth to conceal my distaste, smiling his neat, serious smile." The inevitably unrenewable nature of the experience of school life encourages a false enlargement of significance. In this sort of world it is the interactions between people that matter and not the unformed inner states, artificially reorganised by the novelist. The comparison quoted on the jacket of this book with *The Catcher in the Rye* is extremely inept. Caulden Holdfield, before he turns into Myshkin, is an objectified character, somebody; Mr. Burt's hero is a partial, sentimental view of everybody. But for all its literary remoteness from actuality this is in some ways a powerful book. In the first place it is extremely comprehensive, the whole scene is filled in, the author shows an impressive, rather irrelevant, compulsion to record all observable detail and, secondly, there are moments when the convention of self-centredness is abandoned, in particular a remarkable description of a "pre-game rally," a terrible ritual of whipping up enthusiasm for a football match. This is a serious, almost deadly serious, novel and, apart from occasional riots of purple, a highly technically accomplished one, but what is really of value in it—the image of a compact, violent, artificial world—tends to be smothered by subjective clichés.

MISS EDITH DE BORN'S *The Imperfect Marriage** deserves its commendation by the Book Society; it is a pure example of the straight novel, technically faultless and with an original

* *The Romantic Egoists*. By LOUIS AUCHINCLOSS. Gollancz. 10s. 6d.

† *Scotland's Burning*. By NATHANIEL BURT. Gollancz. 12s. 6d.

* *The Imperfect Marriage*. By EDITH DE BORN. Chapman and Hall. 10s. 6d.

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and interesting subject. Louise, a girl of the minor French aristocracy, marries Roger, a business man from the north of France. Taken prisoner in the war he returns from the camp homosexual, a transformation which nothing in the earlier part of the story had remotely suggested and the causes of which remain quite unexplained. They continue to live together for he maintains that he still loves her in all but the most practical fashion. Her increasing resentment about this state of affairs comes to a head in the form of a brief but dismaying ecstasy with a young philosophy teacher. "In that bare, shabby room she had experienced none of the exaltation, agony, pain or rapture that belong to love—nothing but feelings of pleasure." This is somehow a turning-point, for soon after, early next morning indeed, "suddenly they were in each other's arms—each the more humble each taking the greater blame for lies and falsities, neither quite conscious of the words they stammered. They clasped one another, as if rescued in the midst of a turbulent stream, carried at tremendous speed by its seething foaming current out into an immeasurable ocean of repentance." This is a tricky subject and Miss de Born handles it with the greatest delicacy. The last quotation shows her discretion, for it is the culminating moment of the story. Unfortunately, her discretion is so great as to impede intelligibility. Louise's brief unfaithfulness might be thought to have shown her that she was making too much of what her husband withheld from her. Yet it seems to restore to her what was withheld, to effect a miraculous cure of her husband's complaint. It is, in fact, not made clear whether they are restored to marriage in the full sense or whether they just by-pass the pathological obstacle to such a restoration, by her not making too much of it and by his not letting it redirect the love he claims to feel for her. In a book, such as this is, about the place of sex in love, some plain speaking is inescapable. The trouble is that Miss de Born has chosen to view her characters from a point of view which natural delicacy insists shall be a blurringly remote one.

These four novels are case-studies in the limitations of technique, for all their professional excellences they fail to catch the real humanity of their subject matter, their characters are not immersed in the real world which we read novels to find out about.

AGAINST this background Ring Lardner Jr.'s *The Ecstasy of Owen Muir** is particularly attractive and refreshing. In essentials it is a highly up-to-date study of the ravages of belief. Owen Muir is a gentle, kindly oaf whose differentiating characteristics are literal honesty and a generous fund of faith. The book concerns three stages of the disconcerting odyssey through which these features of character lead him. As the son of an extremely hard-faced Republican business-man, his first troubles begin when his Tolstoyan refusal to be called up for military service seems to jeopardise the juicy returns on which his father is counting from a dollar-a-year job in Washington. The attempt of some fellow-prisoners to castrate a negro who tries to eat with them in the slackly administered prison camp to which he is sent converts him to the militant defence of democracy. Stage two begins after the war when he falls in love with his secretary, April, who turns out to be a Catholic. At this point the book's principal target—the horrors of American Catholicism—comes within range. The first horror is Monsignor Stephen A. Frasso who undertakes Owen's conversion at odd moments while making himself up for television appearances. Owen and April marry and, after some tribulations about the morality of contraception—as a born Catholic April is unable to comprehend Owen's insistence on literal adherence to the rules, an adherence which induces him furtively to puncture his wife's appliance—they are faced with the therapeutic abortion required by her becoming pregnant while suffering from rheumatic fever. As a counterpoise to this there is the story of Dennis Carpenter, who eventually marries Owen's sister, after his third or fourth professionally and expensively acquired dissolution. Mr. Lardner's animus rises to its summit in recounting the consequences of Owen's work for a branch of the Catholic War Veterans in the course of which he is beaten up by police and bystanders for going as an observer to Paul Robeson's Peekskill meeting, since, disgusted by what he sees, he refuses to disclose his identity and affiliations. The final stage consists of the break-up of his marriage, an event assisted by the machinations of April's former lover who, as an FBI agent in the Communist party, helps by his testimony to

* *The Ecstasy of Owen Muir.* By RING LARDNER Jr. Jonathan Cape. 12s. 6d.

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secure the imprisonment of his mother whom he has brought into the party. Owen retires to a monastery with his Catholic faith intact.

This is a plainly written book and something of a contraption, circumstances conspire somewhat mechanically to suit the author's polemical purpose. But it is bursting with material and with relevance to the real world and is often extremely funny. In very general terms it is rather like William Cooper's *Scenes from Provincial Life* though less complex and sophisticated and much more organised around a message. Mr. Lardner takes the same cool, colloquial stance as Mr. Cooper, both are in direct contact with the world, unhampered by any thick lens of literariness. Both books are delightfully, almost intoxicatingly, free of stale tricks. They contain no reveries about childhood, no dreams, no sensitive delineations of internal states. *The Ecstasy of Owen Muir* is no masterpiece, the principal characters, especially April, are a bit flat, the good are rather too immediately distinguishable from the bad, the action is jerky. But for all that it is a very good book. A whole form of life, with whose public end newspapers have acquainted us in a fragmentary way, is presented in personal terms. As a kind of relaxed, temperate Sinclair Lewis Mr. Lardner takes his place in the tradition of American satire. His good-humoured refusal to be overcome by anger only increases the cruel accuracy of his vision. In narrowly technical terms this novel bears much the same relation to the others I have discussed as a sack does to the creations of Dior. The vital point is that, unlike them, it tells us something worth knowing.

This is perhaps the proper place to mention the publication, in a rearranged form, of Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*,* the author's last instructions on this matter having been explained and executed by Malcolm Cowley. As revised the story runs in roughly chronological order, beginning with Dick Diver's first contact with Nicole in Switzerland, in the course of which the nature of her problem is disclosed, and the original beginning, Rosemary Hoyt's arrival at Cap d'Antibes, which highlights her in a way the rest of the story does not require, is moved on to page 69. The result of this and certain other shifts is to my mind a marked improvement and anyone who, liking the rest of Fitzgerald, has never been able to agree with him that this is his best book, should re-read it in this form. Perhaps someone might do the same thing for *The Memorial*. There is a world of difference between flashbacks, as means for the distribution of emphasis and actual dislocation.

Anthony Quinton

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* *Tender is the Night*. By F. Scott Fitzgerald. Penguin Books. 2s. 6d.

About our Authors

Maurice Cranston is at present writing a book on Locke. . . . J. W. N. Watkins is lecturer in political science at the London School of Economics. . . . Michael Kitson is assistant lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art at London University. . . . W. S. Graham's novel *The Nightfishing* will be published in March by Faber & Faber. . . . Alfred Burmeister has been living in Munich since his release from a Soviet slave-labour camp a few years ago. . . . Herbert Passin is an American anthropologist who has travelled extensively in Asia. . . . Christopher Hollis is M.P. for Devizes. *Can Parliament Survive?* was delivered as a lecture before the University of Leeds in October 1954. . . . Albert Dasnoy is a Belgian painter and art critic, living in Brussels. . . . Richard Eberhart, an American, is author of several volumes of poetry. . . . Francis King teaches and lectures for the British Council in Athens: his most recent novel, *The Dark Glasses*, was published by Longmans, Green. . . . F. N. Souza was born in the Portuguese Indian state of Goa. As a member of the Bombay group of painters, his paintings, writing, and character are much discussed in India. . . . Macmillan will publish Robert Conquest's new volume of poetry in the spring. . . . Alfred Cobban is Professor of French History in the University of London.

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CARAVAGGIO *Detail from The Death of the Virgin* Paris, Louvre (photo: Giraudon)

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Arthur H. Compton
and others

21s.

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Congress for Cultural Freedom

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Alberto Moravia

A GHOST AT NOON

Until he became a wealthy script-writer Molteni and Emilia were happy in their poverty. Why did the ideal marriage break? Set in the film colonies of Rome and Capri, Moravia studies the moods and emotions of his characters in relation to those of the Odyssey which they are filming. The result, a subtle study in psychological detection, marks yet another stage in Moravia's progress. 12*s* 6*d*

Tennessee Williams

THE ROSE TATTOO

In this new play which has already been a big success in New York, the author of *A Streetcar Named Desire* has created another memorable portrait in his gallery of women, Serafina delle Rose, the Sicilian immigrant to the Gulf Coast. This is a drama of passion which strikes with the impact of truth. 10*s* 6*d*

D. J. Enright

ACADEMIC YEAR

In this comedy of manners, Mr. Enright, already well known to readers of *Encounter*, tells how three diverse Englishmen, teachers in the University in Alexandria, discover the sight, the sounds, the smells of Egypt, and learn to understand its poverty, corruption and realistic wisdom. 12*s* 6*d*

Peter Matthiesson

RACE ROCK

This is the story of four young Americans in a New England fishing village, and the tempest of violence which transforms their lives. Already known as fiction editor of *The Paris Review* and a contributor to *Cornhill*, the author displays in his first novel a new and original talent. 12*s* 6*d*

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